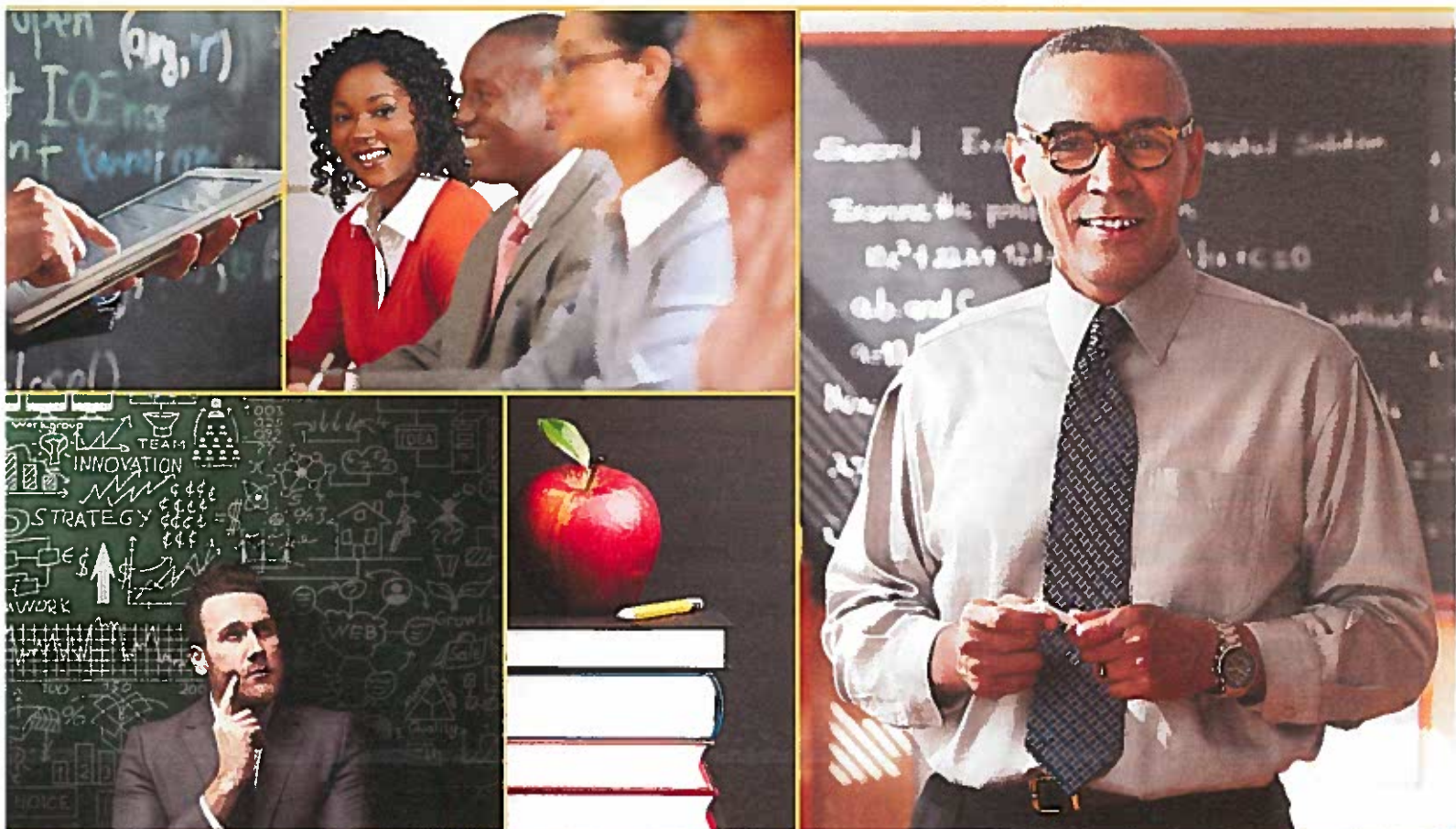


Start or revitalize a ministry in your church

QUICK START GUIDE



SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER



Quick Start Guide for the School Board Member

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Introduction

Welcome to membership on the local Seventh-day Adventist school board! A board is an important key to operating an effective school program. It provides a platform for church employees, school faculty and staff, and church members to come together and make decisions to further the mission of Adventist education. Being a member of such a board is a weighty and honorable task.

With such an important responsibility, each person selected should have the following qualities before they are consecrated: good financial judgment and ability, belief in and loyalty to the principles of Christian education, good judgment and tact, and experience in school matters. Most importantly, board members are trustees whom the constituency holds responsible for operating in the school's best interest. You have been chosen because your church believes you exemplify these qualities.

School Board Membership

The school operating board is composed of members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who represent a cross section of the school constituency. This membership may include:

- Chair
- Vice-chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Principal/head teacher
- Pastor(s)
- Parents of current students
- Home and School Association leader
- Union and conference officers and office of education personnel (ex officio)
- Other church members

The school board members (other than ex officio members) are to be elected by the constituent church or churches in accordance with school constitutions or working policies. Ex officio members are considered voting members of the board.



Board Member Job Description

The school board is responsible for the operation of the school within the guidelines and policies adopted by the union education code, conference board of education, and the school constituency as stated in the school constitution. As you begin functioning as a member of the school board, you should know that your church assumes that you:

1. Are accepting this responsibility willingly. Only willing members can effectively perform the services that will be necessary.
2. Are a loyal and faithful member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
3. Are faithful in your stewardship responsibilities in terms of time, talent, and financial means.
4. Will seek the Lord for divine guidance and courage to make necessary decisions.
5. Will be both ethical and professional in handling the information and decisions you will confront. You should be loyal to God, the pastor, elected leaders, teachers, parents, and students.
6. Will put the interests of the church school above any personal interest, for only thus can selfless service be rendered to the church and to Jesus, the Lord of the church.
7. Will always remember the mission of Adventist education when making decisions.

Basic Roles and Responsibilities of School Board Members

1. Represent the constituency of the school. This includes paying careful attention to the issues at hand and responding with feedback and votes at critical times of decision.
2. Attend all school board meetings, as far as possible.
3. Ensure the implementation of policies and plans of the conference board of education as administered by the office of education.
4. Be willing to help carry out the duties of the school board. Be aware that these are school board responsibilities rather than individual member responsibilities. These duties typically are:
 - a. To organize itself at its first meeting of the fiscal year.
 - b. To cooperate with the local conference office of education by making recommendations to the conference board of education as to who to hire as certificated staff and by providing support personnel.
 - c. To appoint subcommittees when necessary to expedite the business and safe operation of the school. These may include an executive, finance, personnel, facilities management, and marketing committee, and others.



- d. To ensure that the majority of members on all committees are comprised of school board members.
 - e. To ensure that each new committee that is established has a clearly defined mission and terms of reference.
 - f. To carry out all of the plans and policies voted by the constituency and to provide for the general welfare of the school.
 - g. To authorize the expenditure of school funds.
 - h. To approve the annual operating budget.
 - i. To determine any needed capital improvements not provided for in the annual budget, and to recommend an equitable apportionment of funds needed to meet the needs.
 - j. To provide an agenda for constituency meetings.
 - k. To keep the constituency informed about the financial matters, needs, and programs of the school. However, it is important to realize that an individual board member does not speak or act for the board unless authorized by the board.
5. Ensure that the school complies with all conference regulations concerning insurance and liability. It is the board's responsibility, in conjunction with the conference office of education, to ensure oversight of the facility and its programs.
 6. Recognize that the authority of the board is only expressed by its actions as a board. Individual members may act or speak on behalf of the board only when authorized to do so.
 7. Recognize that your responsibility is not to run the school, but, together with your fellow board members, to see that it is well run.

Suggestions to Enhance Your Contributions as a Board Member

When you join the school board, you are joining a group of people committed to the success of the church school. First, you will want to review the list of board members and identify their individual responsibilities. Next, cultivate relationships with your fellow members and find ways to build relationships between other board members so you can enhance your collective understanding of the issues facing the board.

WHAT A BOARD AS A WHOLE BRINGS TO THE SCHOOL

- Collective wisdom
- Continuity of policy
- Discerning questions
- Expertise
- Influence to attract resources
- Knowledge of the church and its mission



Board members need to understand every aspect of board function. Develop a reputation for being purposefully curious. As a board member, you owe it to yourself and the school to become familiar with all aspects of board membership. Review past board minutes and materials pertaining to your school board.

12 Keys to Effectiveness

1. **Commitment:** A deep, genuine commitment to the Lord Jesus is the most important part of your work on this board. Board members' minds are to be the link through which God communicates His will to this school. Please spend time in earnest prayer before coming to each board meeting so your mind and spirit are in tune with the Divine.
2. **Participation:** In his book *Guidelines for Committee and Board Members* (Review & Herald, 1973), Dr. Robert Firth states: "No doubt there are places where silence is golden, but not on a committee. A committee member who sits through a meeting without saying something to aid the discussion is a useless committee member. The committee meeting is a place to exchange ideas, to create new ones, to hammer ideas into solutions, or to set a course of action" (page 48).

Dr. Firth balances things, however, by cautioning against going to the other extreme: "There are those who talk a great deal at committee meetings and say virtually nothing. They might call such talking participation, but few others would. Participation assumes the making of a worthwhile contribution to the discussion."

Don't be afraid to speak your conviction or disagree with others. This involves disagreeing with anyone, including the pastor. You are only as strong as your willingness to express opinions and convictions. All school board members are equal. Every voice carries equal weight. Every vote has equal weight. Some members may have a wider range of knowledge than you, but that should not stop you from expressing your own conviction. Don't be afraid to reveal your ignorance. It is nothing to be ashamed of. Don't hold back an idea or motion because you are afraid you will be voted down. Realize now that you will win some and lose some on this board. That's democracy. Don't let a loss in support of your idea discourage you.

3. **Information:** Decisions are only as good as the information on which they are based. Insist on adequate

DISRUPTIVE BOARD MEMBER MEETING BEHAVIOR

- Interrupting
- Cross talk
- Not listening
- Side conversations
- Rambling
- Tardiness
- Poor preparation
- Early departure
- Noisy distractions

information before you vote. It is much better to postpone a decision than to rush into something with only partial, incomplete facts. The pastoral staff, teachers, and parents will do everything possible to give you all the information available. Whether as a group or personally, the teachers and board chairperson will make any information you ask for available—except confidential, personal information.

4. **Respect and Trust:** It is necessary to have an attitude of mutual respect and trust. Each member of this school board was chosen because he or she has become known in your church for certain traits of leadership and areas of expertise. Unless we respect and trust one another, there will not be the free and open exchange that is necessary for good decision-making. If you have doubts and questions about the integrity or sincerity of any member of the board, including the pastor, express them to the appropriate individual and follow biblical principles. Ask questions. Clear the air. This will make the board's work a joy as friendships develop. Board members are not adversaries, but teammates trying to win for God.
5. **Honesty:** Please don't play games or seek to manipulate. Avoid hidden agendas. This can destroy trust. Be honest, straightforward, and direct.
6. **Decision Making:** Vote with your head, not your heart. Make decisions based on facts, needs, and careful thinking, rather than on emotional reactions or past experience. Avoid preconceived ideas or assumptions based on a bad experience or accumulated problems through the years. Above all, keep the school's mission in mind when making all your decisions.
7. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Filter all discussion and decisions through the viewpoint of diverse ethnic groups. Respect the historical background and special needs of others.
8. **Wounded Feelings:** Sometimes those who have never served on a board are surprised at the candor, openness, and willingness to disagree with a fellow board member. But that is one thing that makes boards effective. Effective members do not wear their feelings on their sleeves. They present ideas that they expect may be shot down rapidly. Each member tries not to become personally involved with his or her own ideas and opinions. They realize that the open discussion in the board meeting will expose weakness in arguments and ideas. This results in better decisions than those any member might develop alone. Another sensitive issue arises when people think, "They never use my ideas." That isn't true! Your ideas will undoubtedly stimulate the ideas of others, and when thrown into the mix with the rest of the group's ideas, yours will be a part of the overall development even though they may not be exactly what the finished product turn out to be.
9. **Handling of Board Decisions:** When a decision is reached that involves constituents of the school, do not assume you are free to communicate that information. The person assigned by the board has the responsibility of disseminating that information. For example: Suppose the board votes to make a personnel change at the school. You decide to tell a friend of yours, who tells a friend of theirs, who tells the person being



replaced—all before the board’s spokesperson has even made contact. You can imagine how the person would feel hearing that information through an unofficial channel instead of the proper channel. Holding your tongue may be difficult sometimes, but Proverbs 21:23 reminds us that those who guard their tongues keep themselves from calamity.

10. **Confidentiality of Discussions:** One way to ensure certain discussions remain confidential is to make all board meetings open and go into executive session for items requiring confidentiality. Executive session discussions should never be shared outside of the meeting because of legal ramifications and confidentiality requirements. No member of the school board should be placed in the unenviable position of having a confidential statement he or she made in the board room come back to him or her on the telephone, on the street, in the office, or in any other social situation. The various viewpoints of the group as a whole may be recorded if desired, but it is unethical to mention names. Besides, you never know when a person will be persuaded to change the ideas he or she expressed to the group earlier in the discussion.
11. **Representation:** Some people are members of the board because they represent a specific ministry of the church, such as music ministry or children’s ministry. Such board members are expected to be fully informed about the ministry they represent and to make sure the board is fully informed of the way that ministry will be affected by any action or decision the board is considering. However, the members of the church board are expected to represent the best interests of the entire church, without making every decision based on the priority of what would be best for the specific ministry or group with which they might be identified. Try to see the big picture and make decisions on what is best for the church as a whole, rather than voting only the little picture. This will produce a stronger church.
12. **Support of the Majority Vote:** Quoting again from Dr. Firth: “But once a committee has given its group judgment to a problem and decided on a solution by a democratic majority vote, the dissenting individuals no longer have the right of dissent. ...The person who cannot do that has no business serving on the committee and is lacking in ethical values.”

Dr. Firth is quite firm here, and some may even say he is being too hard. However, consider the problem that would arise if a board member were to say to someone else: “I’m sorry the board decided the way they did. I certainly don’t agree and didn’t vote that way.” Immediately that individual has set him or herself up against the board. Loyalty means supporting a vote even if it did not go the way you wanted.

Attendance

Attendance is very important at all board meetings. At times, there will be valid reasons why you cannot attend. If that is the case, please notify the secretary or board chairperson. It is essential to try your very best to be present at each meeting. The constitution generally includes a provision for dealing with excessive absenteeism.

Protocol

The key words when it comes to protocol in board meetings are “courtesy” and “respect” for the chairperson and the process. Request recognition before speaking, and do not raise items that are not on the agenda or of which the chairperson has no prior knowledge. Avoid calling for a question before the discussion has matured sufficiently. Usually it is best to defer to the chair to call for a motion before making one yourself.

Notice of Meetings

You will receive a notice of the next meeting one to four weeks in advance. The constitution may mandate when meetings happen. If not, at the first meeting, the board should establish a particular day of the month, such as the first Tuesday or second Thursday, when the board will meet—unless a different date is voted at one board meeting for the next board meeting.

Agendas

The agenda is a very important document for the effective operation of a board. The agenda is usually developed by the board chair in cooperation with the principal or head teacher, who usually acts as board secretary. Any member of the board should have the opportunity to submit items for the agenda as long as they are appropriate to the work of the board. The board meeting agenda should be circulated several days prior to the meeting so members can come prepared to speak to the substantive issues. Well-managed boards have a specific agenda and stick to the items on that agenda.

Subcommittees

One model of board operation is that of the subcommittee. In this model all substantive issues are initially vetted through an appropriate subcommittee. The subcommittee then makes a report to the full board with recommendations for action or changes in policy. It is important to make sure the issue is fully discussed and studied in a smaller group setting so the full board can concentrate on the larger issues. Agenda items should be submitted to the subcommittee chairperson in advance.

Minutes

Minutes of each school board meeting will be sent to you by mail or email, or passed out at the next meeting. You should obtain a notebook for the purpose of keeping your own minutes. At times the minutes will contain privileged information, so keep this book of minutes for your eyes only. The board also needs to ensure that official minutes of each meeting or subcommittee are kept in a secure location and that one copy is filed with the conference office of education. Academy boards file copies with the union and conference offices of education.



Budgets

A part of the work of the school board involves money. The school board assumes responsibility for the planning and funding of an annual operating budget and capital improvements budget, and appoints subcommittees as needed such as personnel, finance, etc. Each meeting normally includes a review of the financial statement, presented by the treasurer. At first the statement may seem strange and unfriendly unless you have an accounting background. In time, the statement will begin to make sense and you will be able to plot the financial course of the school. If you would like to learn more about the financial statement, you may request a separate meeting with the treasurer, outside of the regular board meeting.

Curriculum

Curriculum and instruction comprise the most important functions of any school. While curriculum decisions are made on the North American Division level and adopted by unions, the board should be aware of all new developments. The school board's curriculum functions include funding a commitment to learning, reviewing administrative reports, adopting curriculum and instruction policies, establishing educational goals, and providing for curriculum leadership.

Conflict of Interest

Even though most board members are not employees of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, every board member must avoid any conflict of interest that would result in personal favor or gain. An example of a conflict of interest would be encouraging and voting for the school to purchase a product or service from which you would profit, or voting for the school to discard or sell something below market value that you might acquire and use to your advantage. Board members are held to a higher standard of conduct. It's important that each board member sign a conflict of interest statement in addition to reading the North American Division Policy Statement on conflict of interest.

See page 16 for the North American Division's Policy Statement on Conflict of Interest.

Policy

The school board is responsible for implementing policies and plans of the union education code and conference office of education. When specific questions on policy arise, the conference superintendent or union education code should be consulted.

The board is also responsible for developing policies in areas of local concern such as use of school property, bus routes and schedules, purchasing procedures, tuition and other methods of support, admission requirements, equipment and maintenance, textbook purchase, master planning, criteria for selection and use of media materials, and dress and social behavior. The board will prepare a school bulletin or handbook that outlines all matters of policy.



Program Evaluation

A major function of the school board is to evaluate the operation of the school. It is the role of the board to consider appeals and answer questions regarding the operating of the school. Programs that are proving ineffective will be reviewed by the board, and solutions will be sought. Programs that continue to be ineffective will be discarded, while those proving effective will be encouraged and expanded. It is also the responsibility of the school board to recognize areas of need and suggest and implement programs that will meet those needs.

It is not the role of board members to evaluate the teaching staff. In fact, it is very important to never discuss personnel issues unless the conference or union superintendent is present.

Minimizing Governance Risks

Prepared by Arthur F. Blinci, ARM, eMBA, Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

Whenever a person accepts the responsibility to serve on a denominational governing board there are certain fiduciary duties that they assume as a board member. It is important for all board members to understand the importance of these duties and that board leadership adheres to maintaining these principles in all board relationships and transactions. Clearly understanding these fiduciary duties will help the board minimize its governance risks:

- **Duty of Knowledge** – Board members need to have a clear understanding of the organization’s mission, strategic goals, legal structure, by-laws and operating policies.
- **Duty of Care** – The board must hold corporate officers and staff responsible to act within professional standards and legal requirements that govern the operation of the enterprise.
- **Duty of Skill & Prudence** – The board must use its expertise to act in a prudent manner; it should be aware of the circumstances that could result from the decisions being made and anticipate both the positive and negative aspects of the actions voted.
- **Duty to Manage** – It is the board’s responsibility to elect personnel, establish policies for the organization, and ensure compliance with all legal requirements to which the organization may be subject.
- **Duty of Obedience** – The board must act within the precepts of its corporate charter and by-laws. Board members must be on guard for unauthorized acts and report such acts when they are discovered.
- **Duty of Loyalty** – Being a board member requires allegiance to the organization you are serving. All board members must avoid conflicts of interest or taking actions based on inside information that may lead to personal gain or advantage. Board members need to come to board meetings prepared to engage in the discussion and act in an ethical manner at all times.
- **Duty of Confidentiality** – Maintaining confidentiality is an essential characteristic of an ethical board member. All boards should stress the importance of being able to openly discuss items of business without fear that their words will be repeated outside of the boardroom.



Professionalism in denominational board membership can best be summed up in the term “servant leadership.” As a board member, we must subordinate our personal interest for the good of the organization we are serving. We must always act with integrity and in good faith for the best interest of others and to protect the organization’s reputation and the good will it has in the community. Board members need to avoid conflicts of interest that may jeopardize or compromise the decisions made and practice the highest standards of care and ethical behavior at all times.

Minimizing Conflicts of Interests

Within the denominational setting it is impossible to eliminate all potential conflicts of interest. Just because an individual may serve on more than one denominational board does not in itself constitute a conflict of interest. However, a conflict of interest may arise when there is “any circumstance under which an officer, board member, employee or volunteer by virtue of financial or other personal interest, present or potential, directly or indirectly, may be influenced or appear to be influenced by any motive or desire for personal advantage, tangible or intangible, other than the success and well-being of the denomination” (NAD Working Policy S47 05&10).

What should a board do when there is perceived conflict of interest? Manage it! All boards should require board members to sign an annual disclosure statement of any potential personal conflicts of interest they may have. There is nothing wrong with requiring a board member to make known any potential conflicts of interest before the board engages in the consideration of a specific item of business. In fact, it is unethical for a board member to remain silent concerning potential conflicts of interest they may have while serving the organization.

Once the disclosure has been made, it should be documented in writing and the board should consider how they wish to proceed with the item of business in question. The board member having the conflict should voluntarily physically excuse him or herself from the meeting until the board has finished consideration of that specific business item. This means the board member will not participate in the discussion, will not vote on the matter, and will not even be present or able to influence the other board members’ decision in any way. When the final action has been taken, it should be noted in the official records that the person with the conflict of interest was not present at the time said action was taken by the board.

Maintaining Confidential Information

While serving as a board member, you will receive reports that require strict confidentiality once a decision has been made about them. Once an action is taken, all board members must maintain the confidentiality of the discussion or information upon which the board made its decision. The Adventist grapevine is ripe with all the juicy details of conference committee meetings, school board meetings, and church board meetings. Often times the details are circulating even before the board meeting has been adjourned. This breach of confidentiality can and has led to denominational organizations being held liable for defamation lawsuits caused by the loose lips of board members.

If you find this is a problem within your organization, the board chairperson should address it. It is inappropriate for the board to exclude members who breach confidential information from the meetings or to meet without properly notifying them of duly called board meetings. However, the board can take measures through the appropriate channels to remove an individual from board membership for continued disregard of confidentiality issues. This is a critical area of board governance that must be carefully monitored and managed in order to protect the board's integrity and effectiveness.

Other Safeguards

Protecting organizational integrity is an essential governance function. It is critical for all board members, employees, and volunteers to understand that it is inappropriate for them to associate the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Church or the denominational entity with their external activities, whether those be their own personal businesses or other business organizations. This may include the use of organizational stationery for personal correspondence or other non-denominational related business purpose. The use of your organization's name, stationery, or business forms by others can imply an endorsement that may create the potential for unexpected or unintended liability or financial responsibility. When such practices are discovered, the individual involved should be asked to immediately cease using your organization's name.

"The Genesis of Many Accidents"

It is a privilege to serve as a board member of a denominational organization. This is a privilege that requires a commitment of service based on loyalty not only to an organization but to Jesus, our Savior, as well. "The genesis of many accidents takes place in the boardroom," reports Marvin Rienke, former president of the YMCA Services Corporation. This is a sobering statement that reminds us that the decisions or actions that a board fails to make in a prudent or timely manner may and can lead to a tragic accident or financial failure. It is for this reason that all board members must place a high priority on maintaining the highest level of integrity at all times. Governing boards should review their fiduciary duties on a regular basis and monitor the results and consequences of their actions. To do less is a breach of the sacred responsibility that has been committed to your care—safeguarding the ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Reprinted with permission from the September 2009 issue of Adventist Risk Management, Inc. Solutions.

Final Responsibility

It is your responsibility as a board member to review all operations of the local Seventh-day Adventist Church school and to act on behalf of all constituents. Given such an important assignment, your dedication to the school and this position is extremely important. As you vote on issues that affect the school and outreach, please do so knowing that the Holy Spirit is beside you, ready to guide you.



Recommended Resources

Local Union Education Code. Copies should be available at the church school. Contact your union office's education department for additional copies.

Local Union School Board Member Handbook. This handbook is available from your conference or union office of education.



Appendix

NAD Working Policy 2008-2009

Financial—General/619-625

S 47 Conflict of Interest and/or Commitment

S 47 05 Conflict of Interest and/or Commitment Defined—

Conflict of interest shall mean any circumstance under which an employee or volunteer by virtue of financial or other personal interest, present or potential, directly or indirectly, may be influenced or appear to be influenced by any motive or desire for personal advantage, tangible or intangible, other than the success and well-being of the denomination.

Because of the common objectives embraced by the various organizational units and institutions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, membership held concurrently on more than one denominational committee or board does not of itself constitute a conflict of interest provided that all the other requirements of the policy are met.

A conflict of commitment shall mean any situation which interferes with an employee's ability to carry out his/her duties effectively. Elected, appointed, or salaried employees on full-time assignment are compensated for full-time employment; therefore, outside or dual employment or other activity, whether compensated or not, that in any way interferes with the performance of an employee's duties and responsibilities is a conflict of commitment. A conflict of commitment also exists in situations where an employee functions contrary to the values and ethical conduct outlined in the organization's statement of ethical foundations and conduct (see model Statement of Ethical Foundations recommended by the 1999 Annual Council as guidelines for divisions) or when an employee functions contrary to established codes of ethical conduct for employees in particular professions (e.g. legal, investments).

S 47 10 Individuals Included Under This Policy—

All trustees, officers, executive committee/board members, employees, and volunteers of denominational organizations shall be subject to this policy.

S 47 15 Conditions Constituting Conflict—

A trustee, officer, executive committee/board member, employee, or volunteer has a duty to be free from the influence of any conflicting interest or commitment when serving the organization or representing it in negotiations or dealings with third parties. Both while on and off the job an employee is expected to protect the best interests of the employing organization. The following list, though not exhaustive, describes circumstances and conditions that illustrate conflict of interest or commitment:



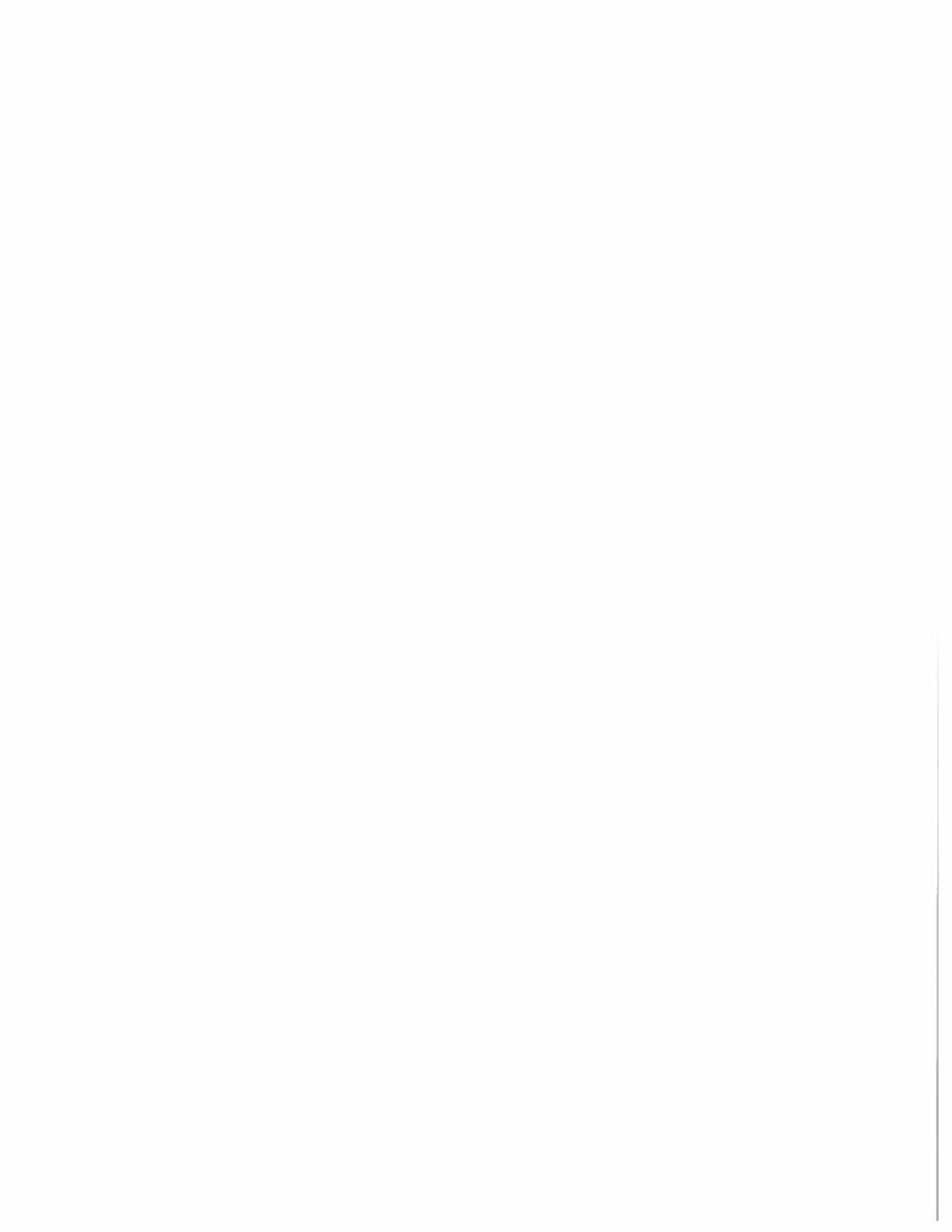
FEA 30 35 School Operating Board—Functions—

The functions of the school board are to:

1. Ensure the implementation of policies and plans of the conference office of education.
2. Develop a clear, practical set of objectives in harmony with the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education.
3. Develop policies in areas of local concern such as:
 - a. Use of school property
 - b. Bus schedules and routes
 - c. Purchasing procedures
 - d. Tuition and/or other methods of support
 - e. Admission requirements (in accordance with state, provincial or conference guidelines)
 - f. Equipment and maintenance of school plant
 - g. Textbook purchases (pupil or school-owned)
 - h. Master planning
 - i. Criteria for selection and use of films and media materials
 - j. Dress and social behavior.
4. Support the principal (or head teacher) in the administration of the school program.
5. Employ classified personnel as needed.
6. Support the Home and School Association.
7. Ensure that official minutes of each meeting of the school board or subcommittees are kept and one copy filed with the conference office of education. Academy boards are to file copies with the union and conference offices of education.
8. Consider appeals and answer questions regarding the operation of the school.
9. Participate in the process of school evaluation.
10. Cooperate with and support the conference office of education in-service education program.
11. Consider a proposed plan of school organization including a constitution and bylaws.

12. Adopt the recommended conference-wide school calendar.
13. Authorize the preparation of a school bulletin.
14. Assume responsibility for the planning and funding of an annual operating budget.
15. Assume responsibility for planning and funding a capital improvements budget.
16. Consult the conference guidelines for construction procedures.
17. Cooperate with the union and conference offices of education in matters of curriculum development.
18. Appoint subcommittees as needed such as personnel, finance, etc.





School Board Member

This Quick Start Guide for School Board Members is full of important information to help you fulfill your responsibilities to your school. This guide contains a job description, instructions for getting started, tips for maintaining a successful ministry, troubleshooting suggestions, recommended resources, and more. Whether you're new to this ministry or an experienced volunteer, this Quick Start Guide will inspire you with lots of great ideas you can immediately put to use as a school board member.

Other titles in the Quick Start Guide series:

- Home and School Association
- Church Board
- Church Clerk
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