The Role of the Board of Education

The role of a Board member is to ensure that the District is well run through the creation and updating of policies. These policies serve as a guide to the Superintendent and provide direction, a basis for decision-making, and an imperative for action.

When hearing concerns on issues affecting a District as a whole, the Board members function as policy makers. They place these concerns on a meeting agenda for discussion by the entire board or a board committee. The discussions can result in new or revised District policies.

As individuals, Board members cannot make decisions for the Board, take actions for the Board, or speak for the board, unless the board has authorized them to do so. Board members are sworn to abide by the New Jersey School Board Member Code of Ethics, which define the parameters under which members function.

The Hanover Park Regional School District Board of Education functions by committee to review recommendations of the Superintendent on the operation of the district, development of the budget, facilities maintenance, curriculum development, etc. The Board operates with eight committees: Buildings, Grounds, and Transportation; Curriculum; Finance; Negotiations; Personnel; Policy; Public Relations; and Student Affairs. The committees consist of three board members, the board president, and a district administrator(s).

Sometimes, a community member contacts individual Board members about personal issues. When that happens, Board members will rightfully encourage the community member to follow the chain of command—beginning with the classroom teacher and progressing through the hierarchy. Simultaneously, the Board Member will alert the Superintendent about the issue. Thinking that contacting a Board of Education member means "going right to the top" actually complicates rather than alleviates any problem or issue. Going around or over the school staff creates morale problems and puts Board members outside their area of responsibility. When the chain of command is used properly by citizens and Board members, it improves communication and leaves the Board of Education free to act as final arbiter on
issues that have not been resolved at other steps in the chain. To determine who best should handle a matter or question, ask yourself, “Who is closest to the problem?” Most often the answer is a staff member. Bringing your concern to a teacher or principal will quickly get a response. If this is not the case, the next step is to seek out the Superintendent. As a final step in this process, concerns can be brought before the Board.

Boards of Education are responsible for ensuring that they provide students the best education the community can afford. Board members have a responsibility to listen to all citizens and to reassure them they always have the best interest of the school system in the forefront of decision-making.