



Board policy and student achievement

Discussion questions

Based on requirements at the local, state and federal levels, board policy determines how students are taught, what they are taught, and how schools manage students and school personnel. Policy affects student learning. Research shows that effective school boards focus on establishing a vision supported by policies targeting student achievement. What questions can the board use to guide its student achievement policy development?

Board policy discussion questions

- **How does the policy advance the best educational interests of all students and does it contribute to student achievement?**

This question can easily be overlooked in the heat of a policy debate on specific issues. Policies must be carefully formulated to address the needs of all students and must not ignore the concerns of any specific demographic group. For example, policies addressing academic standards should not ignore students with disabilities, who may require modified standards.

- **Is the purpose of the policy clear and how does this policy support the mission and goals of the district?**

Comparing a policy to the district's mission and goals is a crucial component in effective policy analysis. If such a comparison reveals little or no correlation, or even a negative correlation, a board should closely examine the policy or revise its mission and goals.

- **What is the relationship of the policy to recent changes in education?**

This criterion justifies updating and revising policy on an ongoing basis. It is important to repeal policies that are obsolete or no longer appropriate due to adoption of new programs. For example, a policy that does not allow students to bring personal technology devices to school would be inappropriate if such devices are now being used as instructional tools.

- **How is the policy related to other board policies?**

By asking this question, a board can guard against one policy contradicting another and ensure that individual policies support each other. The definition of "immediate family," for example, should be consistent throughout personnel policies that address leaves of absence.

- **Is compliance with the policy likely to be consistent?**

High expectations are an important attribute of effective schools and the board's expectation of compliance with policy should be high. If the board cannot reasonably expect a high degree of compliance with a policy, it should rethink the policy.

- **How can a board evaluate the effectiveness of the policy?**

To answer this question, look again at the first question—the relationship of the policy to the best educational interests of students. A board should develop a comprehensive system to measure the effectiveness of its policies to ensure that reasonable progress is being made toward achieving a board's policy goals.

Adapted from the Colorado Association of School Boards

