Houghton-Portage Township Board of Education Handbook

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HPTS Board of Education → Who We Are

Vision Statement

Houghton-Portage Township Schools—a top performing, inclusive school community. We educate our students to develop confidence and capability to adapt and succeed in a dynamic world.

District Mission

We deliver transformative Education to Equip and Empower all students to Achieve.

$E^3 = A$

Beliefs

• Education is a partnership between home, community, and school

• Education is essential

• All students can learn

• All deserve a welcoming and safe environment

Strategic Focus 2023-24

Academics/Programs Houghton-Portage Township Schools will enable and encourage greater participation in various educational pathways.

Culture/Learning Environment Houghton-Portage Township Schools will provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment.

Communications/Community Engagement Houghton-Portage Township Schools will:

Focus on increasing community engagement and pride.

Continue open and direct communication with students and families.

Personnel/Leadership Houghton-Portage Township Schools will recruit, retain, and grow highly qualified staff.

Operations Houghton-Portage Township Schools will ensure high quality facilities that accommodate an evolving student body.

Overview

This HPTS Board of Education Handbook provides supplemental information to HPTS policies, relevant state and federal laws, and MASB/NSBA publications. Board members are encouraged to refer to this handbook for guidance.

HPTS Board of Education policies are posted on the district website. The 2000 series policies govern the Board of Education. Select policy excerpts are included in this handbook for the convenience of the user; however, since policy updates occur throughout the year, discrepancies may develop between the official policy posted on the district website and this handbook. If any discrepancies exist, the district website policy version is the official source of HPTS Thrun policy.

This handbook shall be reviewed as part of the HPTS Board of Education annual Organizational Meeting. It may be revised at any time as changes to Board of Education practices (not governed by the Revised School Code and other applicable law) may occur. Revisions require an approved motion by a majority vote of the Board during a public meeting.

Board members are required to comply with all provisions in the HPTS Board of Education Handbook.

Governance Standards

The HPTS Board of Education strives to be a highly effective Board centered on improving student achievement. NSBA's Center for Public Education publishes characteristics exhibited by high-functioning school boards. The full NSBA publication can be found online.

EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARD

Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.

Effective school boards have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.

Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.

Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.

Effective boards are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.

Effective school boards align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.

Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.

Effective school boards take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts.

The HPTS Board of Education commits to the following governance standards developed by the Michigan Association of School Boards:

- The Board of Education, in cooperation with the superintendent and stakeholders, establishes and commits to a vision for the school district that emphasizes high expectations for achievement of all students and quality instruction.
- The Board of Education governs in a manner that is dignified and worthy of trust.
- The Board of Education is accountable to the school district community.
- The Board of Education holds the Superintendent accountable for creating the outcomes identified in the school district plan.

The HPTS Board of Education further adopts the following to effectively guide our work on behalf of the students we are elected to serve:

- Each trustee is motivated by and focuses on what is in the best interest of all students.
- Each trustee believes in the importance of and actively engages in lifelong learning.
- Each trustee understands and respects both the authority and responsibilities of the Board of Education.
- Each trustee approaches school governance work with a spirit of inquiry.

Code of Ethics

HPTS School District Board of Education will follow high ethical standards which have students as our primary focus. Board Members will promote the best interest of the School District as a whole and will adhere to the following ethical standards and principles per Thrun Policy 2302.

2302 Board Code of Ethics

Each Board member has a fiduciary duty to act in the District's best interests and to faithfully discharge the office of a Board member in compliance with applicable law and Policy to the best of that person's ability.

A. Each Board member will:

1. remember that a Board member's primary concern must be the educational welfare of students attending the District's schools;
2. regularly attend Board meetings and be informed about issues to be considered at those meetings;
3. make decisions only after consideration at legally held Board meetings;
4. focus on governance, not management, taking care to distinguish the Board's responsibility to focus on the District's mission, values, vision, policy development, strategic planning, and budgeting from the administration's responsibility for implementation of Policies and goals, routine operational decisions, and administration of daily operations;
5. employ or contract with and retain those persons best qualified to serve as District employees and insist on a regular and impartial evaluation of all employees in compliance with applicable law;
6. render all decisions based on an objective evaluation of available information, exercising independent judgment;
7. encourage constructive dialogue among Board members and among the Board and students, staff, parents/guardians, and the school community;
8. learn about current educational issues by individual study and through participation in seminars and programs, such as those sponsored by the Michigan Association of School Boards and the National School Boards Association;
9. work constructively and collaboratively with other Board members to establish effective Policies and procedures;
10. work constructively and collaboratively with the Superintendent, staff members, students, parents, and community stakeholders;
11. recognize the Superintendent as the District's chief executive officer;

New Board Members

Checklist - After Election or Appointment to the HPTS School Board

- Sign Acceptance of Office and Oath of Office documents within 10 business days after receiving the Certification of Election
- Administrative setups needed:
    - ID badge
    - District email account
    - Website photo
    - MASB account creation
    - Tax forms and payroll system setup
    - Receive mail slot at school
- Receive following MASB publications from the school:
    - Surviving Your First Year
    - Board Duties under the Revised School Code
    - Open Meetings Act Guide

Orientation Framework

- Meeting with Superintendent and/or Board President to discuss:
    - Officers & Committees
    - General ways-of-working regarding communications and meetings
    - Budget overview
    - Current strategic goals
    - Superintendent evaluation overview
    - Discuss any known or potential conflicts of interest
    - MASB & CCASB overview
- MASB Superintendent evaluation training
- CCASB New Board Member training
- MASB 100 level class completion by end of 1st year
- Read through the following documents:
    - School Board handbook
    - District policies
    - School handbooks: students, employee, admin
    - Superintendent contract

Board Communication

Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community in setting and achieving district goals.

General Principles

- Board members communicate in a manner consistent with the Open Meetings Act.
- No individual Board member has the authority to represent the opinion of the Board of Education. The Board of Education can only take action collectively.
- Media Communications: The Superintendent is the spokesperson for the District. The Board President is the official spokesperson for the entire Board.
- The Board communicates formally with the community through public hearings and regular Board meetings. Public comment at Board meetings is governed by Thrun policy 2504 Public Participation at Board Meetings.
- To manage communications directed toward an individual Board member from media, community members, or school employees: a) thank them for reaching out, b) actively listen to understand, c) direct them to the appropriate person in the chain of command or explain that you'll pass the concern onto the Superintendent and/or Board President for review.
- Board members hold no individual authority to direct the Superintendent.
- No single Board member should give direction or make requests to District personnel without the express permission of the Superintendent.
- Any inquiry/response may be subject to public disclosure per FOIA.
- Board members are encouraged to attend school events. Board members should never visit school buildings unannounced outside of appropriate events.

Concerns about Another Board Member's Performance

1. If a Board member has a concern about another board member's performance, they should first discuss it with the other member.
2. If concerns are unresolved, then they should discuss it with the Board President or other Board officer.
3. The Superintendent is not to be involved.

Committees

The Board of Education conducts the majority of its in-depth discussion, study, and planning through a **Committee of the Whole**, which includes all members of the Board and is used as the primary forum for working sessions. No formal Board action is taken during Committee of the Whole meetings.

The Board shall maintain a **Negotiations Committee** for the purpose of collective bargaining and related labor matters, consistent with legal and contractual requirements.

The Board may establish **ad hoc committees** on a temporary basis as needed to address specific issues, fulfill legal or procedural requirements, or respond to unforeseen or time-sensitive matters. Ad hoc committees shall have a clearly defined purpose, scope, and duration and shall be dissolved upon completion of their assigned work.

Committee members shall be appointed by the Board President unless otherwise directed by the Board. No formal Board action is taken during committee meetings; recommendations or findings may be brought forward for consideration by the full Board at a regular or special meeting.

Developing the Board Meeting Agenda

Agendas are created by the Superintendent and Board President in accordance with Thrun policy 2502.

Board members may request the addition of an agenda item by submitting a written or oral request to the Superintendent or Board President at least five business days in advance of the meeting.

Items are placed on the agenda at the discretion of the Superintendent and Board President.

Calendar

This calendar outlines the approximate timing of BOE-related key tasks for the Superintendent evaluation, strategic planning, and financial oversight. Non-mandatory tasks can be adjusted as needed. Policy revisions are not included in the calendar since they occur as needed throughout the year.

HPTS Board of Education Suggested Calendar	
January	Organizational meeting including election of officers, approval of by-laws, establishing board meeting times and locations, and reviewing the BOE Handbook
February	
March	
April	Informal strategic goals (including eval goals) update by Superintendent
May	
June	- Formal Superintendent evaluation mid-year progress report completed - Current year budget amended - Next year budget is presented for approval End of Fiscal Year
July	Beginning of Fiscal Year CCASB Rep Appointed
August	Informal strategic goals (including eval goals) update by Superintendent
September	
October	
November	- BOE completes annual superintendent evaluation including setting mutually established goals based on the District Strategic Plan and personal development needs - Approve Audit Report
December	Administration presents updated Strategic Plan initiatives

Professional Organizations & Board Education

Professional development and advocacy for Board members is supported and encouraged by the HPTS Board of Education and administration.

Copper Country Association of School Boards (CCASB)

The HPTS Board of Education is an active member in the local CCASB. The organization was instituted in 2001 to bring together board members across the region to discuss issues of common interest and to provide local opportunities for board member development.

CCASB is governed by a board with members from each local district and the CCISD. One member of the HPTS Board is appointed every July to serve on the CCASB board. Generally, the Vice President of the HPTS BOE will serve as the CCASB rep; if unable, another trustee will be appointed to serve.

Each year CCASB hosts training sessions, meetings with legislators, school tours and a spring awards ceremony. Each district honors an outstanding student, educator, and community member at a banquet. The organization also presents the Copper Country Education Leadership Award to an outstanding individual or organization that has had a significant impact on education throughout the region.

Participation is encouraged by all board members to attend training, legislative sessions, school tours, and recognition events.

Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB)

Like all school boards in the state, HPTS is a member of the Michigan Association of School Boards. MASB provides leadership services for school boards and advocates for public education. Members receive a number of mail and email communications from MASB.

New Board members are strongly encouraged to complete the MASB Board Member Certification classes their first year in office.

In subsequent years, Board members are encouraged to participate in additional professional development activity such as county and state level conferences, workshops offered through educational or legal organizations and additional MASB classes and offerings.

The MASB New Member Orientation publication contains valuable information regarding Board member responsibilities and expectations. All Board members are encouraged to become familiar with this publication and to take advantage of professional development opportunities for Board members.

National School Board Association (NSBA)

The purpose of the National School Board Association is to ensure each student everywhere has access to excellent and equitable public education governed by high-performing school board leaders and supported by the community.

HPTS Board members are encouraged to engage with NSBA publications and events.

Filling Board Vacancies

Thrun Policy 2404

The board vacancy process is governed by Thrun policy 2404 Board Member Vacancies and Appointments. Here is the appointment process per the policy:

1. In the event of a vacancy (except a vacancy resulting from a Board member recall), the remaining Board members must fill the vacant Board office by appointment within 30 calendar days after the vacancy occurs, unless a majority of the Board offices are then vacant. If a majority of the Board offices are vacant at the time of a vacancy, or if the remaining Board members fail to fill a vacant Board office by appointment within 30 calendar days after the vacancy occurs, then the ISD board will be authorized to fill the vacant Board office by appointment.

2. The Board may, in its discretion, undertake 1 or more of the following procedures when seeking to fill a vacant Board office:

a. publicize the vacancy, and the Board's intention to appoint a person to fill the vacant Board office through word-of-mouth, news media, notices posted at school buildings and other locations, postings on the District's website and social media, and other means of communicating with the public;

b. accept resumes, applications, letters of interest, or other submissions from persons seeking to be appointed to fill the vacant Board office; and

c. interview applicants for the vacant Board office.

i. All interviews must be conducted during open session of a public Board meeting.

ii. The Board may meet in closed session for the limited purpose of reviewing and considering an application for appointment, if any, if the applicant requests that the application remain confidential.

Time Commitment Estimate

Approximate time commitments and responsibilities of a HPTS Board member:

- 3rd Monday of every month (generally): Board of Education regular meetings
- Committee assignments: approximately two meetings per month
- CCASB events: on average, 2-3 per year
- Ceremonial duties: commencement, honors events
- Preparation for Board meetings
- Training & conferences

Election of Officers

The Election of Board officers is held in accordance with Thrun Policy 2405 Board Officers. General practice is for officers to serve 2 consecutive terms before rotating to share leadership responsibilities across the board members. With majority approval, the Board may decide to renew terms for a longer period to ensure leadership continuity through major initiatives or transition periods.

The ranking officer of the preceding Board will preside over the annual Election of Officers until the election of a president.

In order for a Member of the Board to stand for election, he or she must be nominated by a Board Member. Before a vote takes place, nominations from any Board member will be heard by the Board. The nomination can be made for the entire slate of officers if no Board member opposes this approach. Vacancies will be filled within 30 days.

3. A candidate for a Board officer position must receive a majority vote of the Board members then serving on the Board.

a. If no person receives a majority vote in an initial vote, the candidates for a second vote will consist of:

i. the 2 persons who received the most votes; or

ii. if more than 2 persons are tied for the most votes received, all persons tied for most votes received; or

iii. if 1 person received the most votes and there is a tie for second place, the person who received the most votes and the persons tied for the second place.

b. The process for narrowing candidates will be repeated in subsequent voting rounds.

4. Elected Board officers will serve in that capacity until the following year's organizational meeting at which board officers are elected, unless a Board member resigns from the officer position or a Board majority votes to remove that Board member from the officer position.

D. Board Officer Vacancies

1. If the office of President becomes vacant, the Vice President will succeed to the office of President for the balance of that office's term.

2. If the office of Vice President, Secretary, or Treasurer becomes vacant, the Board must promptly elect a Board member to fill that vacancy.

3. If the office of Secretary or Treasurer becomes vacant, the Board may elect a Board member to fill that vacancy or the President may appoint a Board member to fill that vacancy. The person elected or appointed to a vacant Board office will serve in that office for the balance of that office's term.

Reference

Oath of Office

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER
ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE AND OATH OF OFFICE

Within 5 business days after the certification of a school board election, the school district's "election coordinator" is required to issue a "Certificate of Election" to each elected candidate. Within 10 business days after the issuance of the certificate, the newly elected candidate is required to file an "Acceptance of Office" with the secretary of the school board. The secretary of the school board is required to forward a copy of the "Acceptance of Office" to the school district's election coordinator. (MCL 168.308 and 309)

Before entering upon the duties of his or her office, an elected school board member must take and file the oath provided in Article XI, Section 1, of the State Constitution. (MCL 168.310(1)) The oath is filed with the secretary of the school board.

ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

I do hereby accept the office of Member of the Board of Education of _____,
(LEGAL NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT)

Michigan. Dated _____, 20_____. _____
SIGNATURE

CONSTITUTIONAL OATH OF OFFICE

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
) SS
County of _____)

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of this State, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of Member of the Board of Education of _____ according to the best of my ability.
(LEGAL NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT)

_____
Signature

_____
Name Printed or Typed

Sworn to and subscribed before me this day of 20

_____ *
Signature

_____ *
Title

_____ *
Name Printed or Typed

Subscribed and sworn to by _____
before me on the_____day of _____, _____

_____
Signature of notary public

Name of Notary _____
Notary Public, State of Michigan, County of _____
My commission expires _____
Acting in the County of _____

* This information is requested if Oath of Office is taken before someone other than a notary public.

(October 2009)

[Form Link]

Sample Notice of Vacancy School Board Member

HOUGHTON-PORTAGE TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

1603 Gundlach Rd. | Houghton, Michigan 49931
(906) 482-0450 | FAX (906) 487-5218
www.hpts.us

ANDERS HILL – Superintendent

NOTICE OF VACANCY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

The Houghton-Portage Township School District is seeking qualified applicants to serve on our board of education as a trustee with a term expiring at the 2026 November election.

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age; a citizen of the United States; a resident of the state of Michigan for at least 30 days; and a resident of the school district on or before the 30th day prior to the date of the election/ appointment.

Interested applicants should mail or email a letter of interest, resume and answer the following questions:

1. What relevant qualifications and skills would you bring to the HPTS Board of Education?
2. What do you view as the role of a School Board member?
3. What do you think are the strengths of the HPTS district? And what could be improved upon?

Anders Hill, Superintendent
Houghton-Portage Township Schools
1603 Gundlach Rd
Houghton, MI 49931
ahill@hpts.us

Deadline: August 9, 2024