



## **A Great Education for All Students Depends on Great Leadership**

*Assessing the Roles and Responsibilities of the MNPS School Board*

### *Why School Boards Matter*

School boards play an integral role in supporting growth and improvement in the public school system, setting the tone and vision for the school district and conducting critical oversight to encourage accountability and support positive student outcomes. **In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, strong school board leadership is more vital than ever to ensure all students – regardless of background or circumstance – maintain access to quality education opportunities.**

Boards have a number of integral responsibilities to help manage school districts, including establishing an overarching plan and direction, ensuring effective leadership from the district superintendent, overseeing resource allocation, encouraging continuous improvement, and maintaining open and transparent communication with the public – critical functions that are **even more essential** as the pandemic creates **unprecedented challenges** for schools across the country.

### *About MNPS School Board*

According to Nashville's [Metropolitan Board of Public Education](#), "The school board represents the public's voice in public education, providing oversight for what the public schools need and what the community wants." The Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) board is composed of nine members, each representing one of the nine Metropolitan Nashville school districts, who are elected by the public to serve four-year terms.

[Materials from the Metropolitan Board of Public Education](#) offer an overview of the Board's stated roles and responsibilities, including:

- **Hiring and Managing a Director of Schools:** "The board shall develop a policy manual and employ a chief school administrator who shall carry out its policies through the development and implementation of administrative procedures."
- **Allocating Resources and Encouraging Fiscal Responsibility:** "The board shall adopt a budget to provide the necessary funding in terms of buildings, staff, materials and equipment to enable the school system to carry out its functions."
- **Promoting Continuous Improvement:** "The board shall require reliable information from responsible sources which enable it and the staff to work toward the continuous improvement of the educational program."

- **Informing and Engaging the Public:** “The board shall keep the local community informed about the school system, its accomplishments, and its actions and build public support for the schools by involving the public in the planning process.”

### Is the Current MNPS Board Capable of Meeting its Core Duties?

Despite recent progress, there’s no question the MNPS Board has faced significant challenges over the years, raising concerns about the board’s ability to effectively enact its core responsibilities going forward:

- **Leadership Challenges:** The Board has struggled to retain a quality Director of Schools, cycling through three Directors and two interim Directors over the last five years.
- **Internal Strife:** While there appears to be greater harmony among board members these days, past reports revealed periods of significant [turmoil](#) and disfunction among [Board members](#).
- **Falling Student Outcomes:** MNPS [outcomes are dropping rapidly](#), with a growing number of schools falling into the bottom 5 percent academically.
- **Severe Financial Constraints:** Nashville schools are facing [extreme budgetary challenges](#). With increased pressure from the economic meltdown from the pandemic, it is increasingly critical that school boards invest limited dollars wisely to get the best possible results for students.

### Our Students and Families Deserve Strong Leadership

Now more than ever, students, families, and communities depend on strong school board leadership to ensure our local education system can **survive these extraordinary circumstances and continue providing quality learning opportunities for all.**

NashvilleNOW is publicly committed to ensuring: “we will have a functional School Board in sync with its Director of Schools and our Mayor, together offering a clear vision, a plan, and leadership fully focused on improving academic outcomes for ALL students.”

In the weeks ahead, NashvilleNOW will take a closer look at the challenges facing the MNPS Board, share examples and case studies from more effective school districts around the country, and assess opportunities to build an even stronger, more effective board for the future.