

**Synopsis on School Board Activities  
and  
Thoughts Regarding Attributes for a Successful School Board Member**

I am writing this summary of school board operations as an additional available resource for those seeking to serve successfully on the school board. I have heard from past board members regarding the workload of the school board (now as compared to, perhaps, a decade or decades ago), and those comments clearly show that there may be a disconnect by the public with perceptions of involvement, required duties, roles and responsibilities. Board members, on occasion, have indicated they never even fathomed that our activities would be so intense and stressful or that they would require so much time. With that in mind, let me summarize our schedule of activities. Also, I have attached a presentation which might be useful to anyone who is interested in being elected to the school board. It describes the school district in detail (its identity) and it clearly provides the statutory roles, responsibilities, and required duties of school board members (and also, what board members cannot do).

The Board has at least one regular meeting every month (first Monday of the month unless a holiday—then, it is the next Monday) except January. It has special meetings as necessary, and this has averaged about one every other month. Additionally, the Board conducts its primary discussions, investigations, and debate in workshops which occur at the rate of at least two per month and sometimes three, about 3 hours each. We do not defer work; we schedule workshops and sufficient meetings to conduct all business. Board members are expected to attend all meetings and all workshops and be present from start to finish. In addition to all other duties, we are required to review, in detail, hundreds of policies per year.

Information packets are provided to Board members several days prior to meetings and workshops. It is essential that Board members review the packets so that any questions can be asked of staff before the meetings and workshops so that information requests can be affected and that information available to all Board members at the workshops and meetings. Board members typically serve on at least one or more committees each (we only have six school board members).

By law school board members must attend an initial fourteen hour (2 day) orientation administered by the State Department of Education and taught by the Tennessee School Boards Association (TSBA). They must also attend at least seven hours of continuing education, again taught by TSBA each year, with most Board members attending more in order to understand and address the issues of school finance, school law, curriculum, employment law, contract law, union negotiations, etc. Board members also attend several education related workshops and symposiums (Fall leadership retreat, annual TSBA symposium, etc.), and they are involved with education legislation and meet with State legislators (Day on the Hill, etc.). They also have the opportunity to attend the annual National School Board Association conference.

Board members visit schools under the purview, and in coordination with, the principal of the school. These visits might typically be once per month, perhaps half day, at the schools which are closest or are in their district.

Obviously, Board members take a steady flow of calls from the public and need to actively listen and direct callers to appropriate staff members who can resolve issues.

Sometimes there is a misperception on what a Board member can and cannot do. Individual Board members, by law, cannot direct any operations or changes in the school district nor provide any orders or instructions to staff (only the Superintendent can do this). Board members only provide direction when meeting in a formal Board meeting and voting.

Unfortunately, for all this time, devotion and commitment, the remuneration is only \$30 per Board meeting.

The qualifications to be a school board member are:

1. At least 18 years of age
2. A high school diploma or GED
3. Live in the County/District which they represent
4. Registered voter in that County/District
5. Citizens of recognized integrity, intelligence and ability to administer the duties of the office

The law governing school board members is TCA 49-2-202 and TCA 49-2-202(e)(1) governs filling vacancies mid-term.

Anyone desiring to be a candidate for election to the school board should contact the Election Commission at 792-5770 for information.

The pages which follow are a presentation which comprehensively describes the school district and also indicates the mission, role, responsibilities, duties, and the kinds of attributes which would assist a successful school board member.

Prospective candidates can also get information from <http://www.tsba.net> and <http://www.nsba.org>. These are web sites for the Tennessee School Boards Association (TSBA) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA), respectively.

Respectfully,

Barry E. Breen  
Chairman, BOE, 2007-08  
Cheatham County, Tennessee

**Overview  
of  
Cheatham County School District  
for  
Leadership Cheatham County**

**Prepared By:  
Barry Breen, Chairman  
Board of Education  
2007-08**

# What is the Cheatham County School District?

- **Students**

- 6,850 (Current - 2008 Total) [Average Daily Attendance 6,491]
- Start of 2006-07: 6,941, End of 2006-07: 6,813

- **Employees - Teachers (“Certificated”)**

- 505

- **Employees - (“Classified”)**

- Maintenance, Custodial, Principals, Assistant Principals, Counselors, Teacher’s Aides, Secretaries, Bus Drivers, Cafeteria Staff, Nurses, Technology, Finance Staff, Personnel Staff, Special Ed Staff, Curriculum Staff, etc.)
- 508

# What is the Cheatham County School District (Cont'd)?

- **Facilities**

- Site Locations/Buildings - 14
- Total Building Area - 1,298,880 ft<sup>2</sup> (~ 93,000 ft<sup>2</sup> average)
- (Classrooms, Gymnasiums, Cafeterias, Athletic Fields, Offices, Libraries, Auditoriums, etc.)

- **Transportation System**

- 81 Buses
- 3,604 Miles Driven Each Day (648,720 Annually)
- 79 Different Bus Routes
- 8 Other Vehicles
- 4,750 = Daily Ridership (2006-07 State Report)
- 574 Gal of Diesel Fuel Used/Day (103,320 Gal/Year)

# What is the Cheatham County School District (Cont'd)?

- **Food Service/Cafeterias**
  - 4844 Lunches Served Each Day
  - 1725 Breakfasts Served Each Day
  - 12 Kitchens Which Prepare Food
- **Technology**
  - 1800 School District Computers Used By Students
  - 620 School District Computers Used By Staff

# What is the Cheatham County School District (Cont'd)?

- **Budget**

- **Sources of Income**

- » **State: \$28,105,595**
    - » **County: \$9,275,883**
    - » **Federal: \$3,696,094**
    - » **Cafeteria: \$1,608,855**
    - » **Other: \$1,129,242**
    - » **Notes/Loans: \$4,248,857**
    - » **TOTAL = \$48,064,526**

- **Statewide Statistics**

- **Teacher Salary: 94th out of 135 TN school districts (85th - 2006)**
  - **% County Funding: 27% (State Average 42.1%)**

# What is the Cheatham County School District (Cont'd)?

- Academic Achievement**

- **Grades 3 – 8 (2007) AYP:**

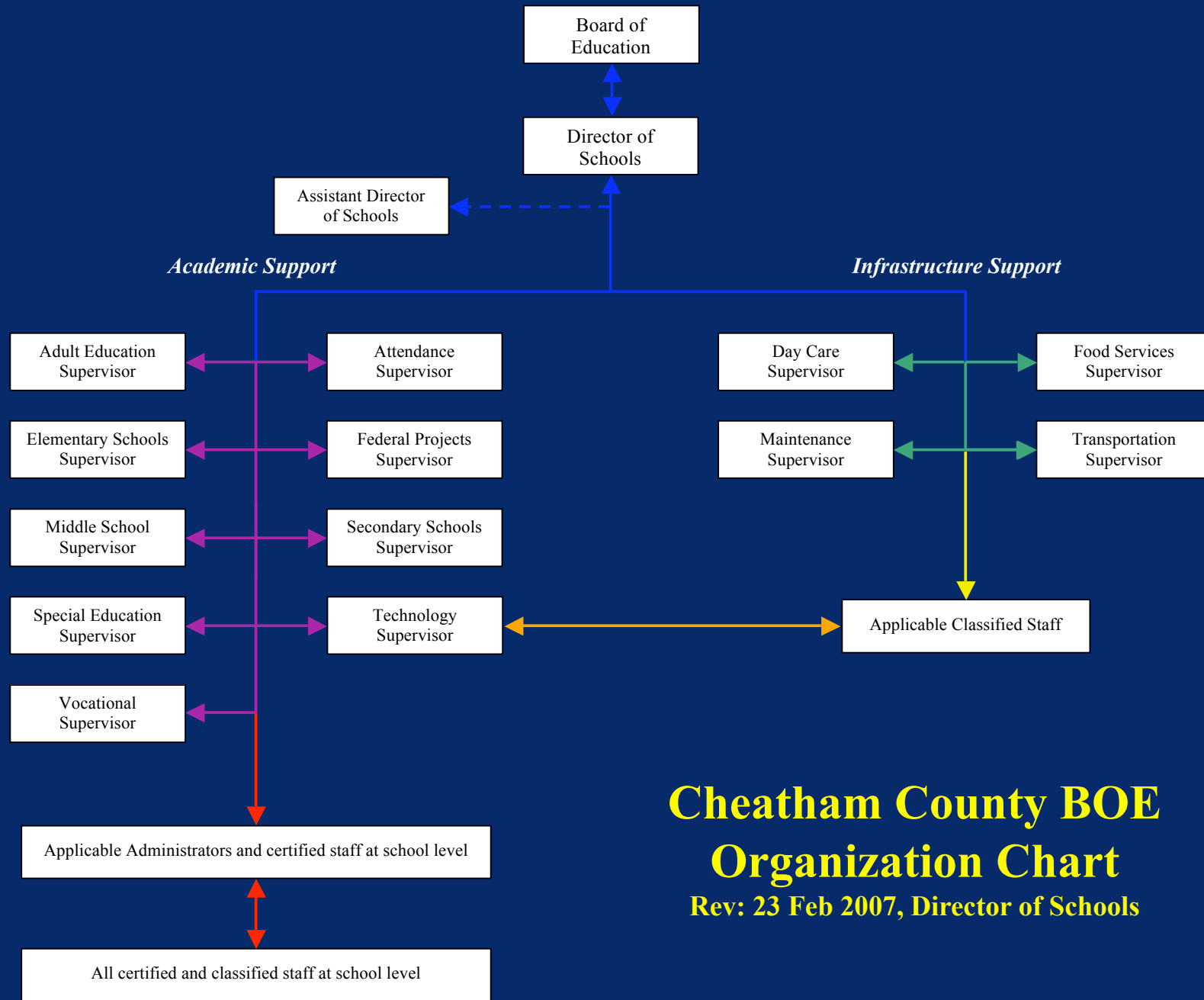
	<u>District</u>	<u>State Avg</u>
Math	A	A
Reading	A	B
Social Studies	B	B
Science	B	B

- **Grades 9 - 12 (2007) ACT:**

Math	20.3	19.9
Reading	21.8	21.1
English	20.9	20.8
Science	21.1	20.4
Composite	21.2	20.7

**Graduation Rate (NCLB):** 91.4% 90.0% (State Goal)

**Attendance:** 94.4% 93.0% (State Goal)



**Cheatham County BOE**  
**Organization Chart**  
 Rev: 23 Feb 2007, Director of Schools

# Cheatham County BOE Governance

- **Who is the School Board?**
  - **Six Elected Members (Residents of districts one thru six)**
  - **Qualifications: 18 Yrs or Older, Registered Voter, High School Graduate**
  - **NOT On County Legislative Body or a County Official**
  - **NOT a Compensated Employee of the School District**
  - **The Only Elected Officials Required by TCA To Attend Training**
    - » **Initial Orientation + 7 Hours Annual Continuing Education**

**Barry Breen, Chairman**

**Susan Greer, Vice-Chair**

**Jackie Kemp**

**Dianne Proffitt**

**Chris Spiegl**

**Rickey Thomas**

# Responsibilities of School Board

- **“Management & Control” established by Vision & Mission**

Mission: “A unified commitment promoting physical, emotional and intellectual excellence”

Vision: “Expect Success” .....that our students will become productive citizens achieving to their maximum potential

- **5-10 Year Plan**

- Academically
- Physically
- Fiscally

***“The Board establishes the destination and any constraints as to general course—staff determines specific route and drives and maintains the vehicle.”***

***.....now, let’s take a look at how the School Board carries out this responsibility***

## **Duties** of the School Board

- **Hold At Least Quarterly Meetings**
- **Elect a Chairperson**
- **Employ a Director of Schools (Superintendent)**
- **Approve Contract & Evaluation Plan for Superintendent**
- **Adopt An Annual Balanced Budget**
  - Authorize payments via approved budget
- **Adopt Formal Policies (to be carried out by Superintendent)**
- **Maintain Approved Minutes of Each Meeting**
- **Approve Tenure for Teachers**

**...continued on next slide**

# **Duties** of the School Board

(Cont'd)

- **Approve Contracts with Teachers**
- **Conduct Dismissal Hearings**
- **Procure All Materials & Assets (thru approved policy)**
- **Ensure Evaluation Plan for Teachers (thru approved policy)**
- **Transfer Students to Alternative School Settings (via policy)**
- **Visit Schools**

*Plus a few others.....TCA49-2-203(a)*

# Other **Powers** of School Board

- **Consolidation of Schools for Efficiency**
- **Health Evaluation of Employee & Students (via policy)**
- **Permit Facilities to be Used by Public and Community Organizations Under Rules Established by Board (via policy)**
- **Establish Minimum Attendance Requirements (via policy)**
- **Election to re-hire, or not, probationary (non-tenured) teachers**
- **Establish & Operate Before & After School Care Programs**

*Plus a few others.....TCA 49-2-203(b)*

# What is “Policy?”

- **The Board is a Policy Making Body**
  - **Six Sections**
    - » **Board Operations**
    - » **Fiscal Management**
    - » **Support Services**
    - » **Instructional Services**
    - » **Personnel**
    - » **Students**
- **Access the Policies On-Line:**  
[http://policy.tsba.net/TOP/CheathamCo\\_Online/index.html](http://policy.tsba.net/TOP/CheathamCo_Online/index.html)
- **The Board Manages the School District through this policy and a Superintendent to carry it out**

# What Does the Board **NOT** Do?

- The Board Does **NOT** Run Day to Day Operations
- The Board Does **NOT** Hire & Dismiss Staff Under the Superintendent
- The Board Does **NOT** Intervene In Decisions Delegated To The Superintendent By The Board
- The Board Does **NOT** Intervene In Actions Being Handled By The Chain Of Command Under the Superintendent

# School Board Member Attributes for Success

- **Understand the Role of a School Board Member**
- **Understand What the Role Isn't**
- **“Actively” Listen**
- **Develop Ability to Compromise**
- **After the “Data is In” and the “Discussion is Complete” Develop a Position and Stay the Course**
- **Understand How the District Operates**
- **Review Materials for Meetings (Don't Wait)**
- **Don't Wait for Board Meeting to Ask Questions (never blind side staff - never “grand stand”)**
- **Be Proactive, Not Reactive**

# Questions/Discussion