



## FAQ: Board Member Continuing Education Requirements

### What are the continuing education requirements for board members?

There are two separate statutes that mandate training for school board members.

The Texas Government Code requires public officials to get one hour of training in laws related to open meetings and one hour of training in open records provisions.

The Texas Education Code requires board members to get ongoing continuing education in accordance with State Board of Education (SBOE) rule. Under the SBOE rule, Board members are required to get three different kinds of continuing education. These three types are sometimes referred to as Tiers One, Two and Three, or as Levels One, Two and Three. The Texas Government Code requirements above can be counted toward fulfillment of the Tier Three requirement.

The requirements in each tier are as follows:

#### Tier One (Orientations)

Board members must receive the following orientation sessions:

- All newly elected or appointed board members must receive a local orientation (at least 3 hours) to their districts. This orientation is provided by local officials, preferably the superintendent and board president. The local district orientation shall address local district practices in the following: curriculum and instruction, business and finance operations, district operations, superintendent evaluation and board member roles and responsibilities, in addition to topics chosen by the local district. The new member must receive the local orientation within 60 days of joining the board.
- Newly elected or appointed board members must also receive an orientation to the Texas Education Code within 120 days of joining the board. This session is provided by the Education Service Centers.
- Experienced board members must receive an update to the Texas Education Code after each legislative session. This session is provided by the Education Service Centers.

#### Tier Two (Teamwork)

Each year, all members of the board and the superintendent must participate, as a group, in a teambuilding session intended to enhance the team's effectiveness. This session can be provided by any registered provider of board member continuing education or can be facilitated by a local district official. The superintendent cannot conduct the teambuilding since they are part of the team. The team building sessions must include the review the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the local board as outlined in the Framework for Governance Leadership, a list of major board activities, and identify in which of those activities board members would benefit from having additional training.

#### Tier Three (Discretionary Continuing Education)

First-year board members must receive at least 10 hours of additional continuing education related to the activities they identified in the Framework as being areas of need. Experienced board members must receive at least five hours of additional continuing education each year related to the areas of need. Up to five hours of this tier three training may be completed in online training courses.

### What happens to board members if they don't get the required continuing education?

Each year at the board's last regular meeting of the calendar year, the president of the board must announce publicly which members of the board have met their annual obligation and which have not. This information must also be made available to the media.

In addition, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) may request evidence at any time of board member compliance with the continuing education rule.

## **Who is the official keeper of the records of attendance at board member continuing education sessions?**

The local district is the official record keeper. In most districts, this task is performed by the superintendent or the superintendent's secretary. Board members should be sure to give the superintendent copies of any documentation they receive for attending sessions. Certain of the requirements must be met "each year."

## **When does the year start and end?**

A board member's annual continuing education requirements must be completed by the last regular meeting of the board in the calendar year. So, a board member has from January 1 of a given year until the regular December board meeting of that year to complete the requirement.

This poses a bit of a hardship for board members who are elected to the board in May. They must complete the requirement, effectively, in their first six months of service. However, many of the major events that offer board member continuing education take place in the months between May and December, and courses for continuing education credit are also offered online through various providers throughout the year.

The biggest difficulty a first year board member may have is completing the tier 2 teambuilding requirement by the December meeting, if the board normally conducts its teambuilding session, as many do, between January and June. In that case, the first-year board member will simply be deficient in meeting the teambuilding requirement the first year. It would be appropriate in such a circumstance for the board president, in making the announcement at the December meeting about which board members have completed the requirement, to note that because the board conducts its annual teambuilding session later in the year, the first-year board member has not yet had an opportunity to participate.

## **How long does the local orientation for new board members have to be and what must be covered?**

The local district orientation shall be at least three hours in length for each new board member. Any sitting board member may attend or participate in the local district orientation. The local district orientation shall address local district practices in the following: curriculum and instruction, business and finance operations, district operations, superintendent evaluation, and board member roles and responsibilities in addition to topics chosen by the local district.

## **What if we have the team building session scheduled and at the last minute one of the board members can't attend? Can we still count the session as meeting the requirement?**

The rule says that all board members plus the superintendent must participate in the team building session. The board must make a good faith effort to comply with this provision. If unforeseen circumstances prohibit a member from attending and if rescheduling would be difficult or costly, the board should proceed with the session and later work with the absent board member to ensure he or she is fully briefed on what transpired in the session. The board should be sure to document this briefing.

## **Can the superintendent or board president conduct the team building session?**

No. Since they are both part of the team they may not conduct the team building session. However, another member of the district staff can conduct the session for the board-superintendent team, as can any outside registered provider. Many boards choose to have an outside provider conduct the session, since having a staff member who works for the superintendent facilitating the session can sometimes lead to uncomfortable situations.

## **We haven't yet conducted our team building session for the year and there are sessions occurring that I think I could benefit from attending. Can I attend these and still count them toward meeting my tier three requirement?**

Yes. It would be advisable, though, that you document the fact that you have reviewed the Framework and identified certain areas of need. You should provide that documentation to the board president when the team building session is held. At the team building session, you should be open to the possibility that the team may identify additional areas for continuing education for the group as a whole.

**We sometimes conduct "work sessions" of our board, at which we are briefed on items about which we are going to have to make a decision. For example, we recently had a briefing from an architect about our building needs in preparation for accepting the plans for a new building. Can we count that session as tier three continuing education?**

No. TEA considers such sessions to be part of the normal work of the board.