



## The Foundational Elements of MTSBA's Organizational DNA

Synthesized from common themes/fused elements reflected in the MTSBA Member Adopted Principles and Guidelines, the MTSBA Board's Strategic Plan, and the MTSBA Board's Specific, Methodical and Consistent Practices Recipe.



## Key Sources of Authority for MTSBA

**MTSBA Core Purpose:**  
To develop the full potential of each child through school board leadership.

### MTSBA Specific, Methodical and Consistent (SMaC) Practices:

1. We support our members in developing the full potential of EACH child.
2. We align all Board and staff work to the Strategic Plan, including priorities, decisions, and resource allocation.
3. We make decisions using knowledge-based practices and ensure meaningful member engagement.
4. We advance solutions that serve the collective membership and maintain fairness across diverse member needs.
5. Each Director fully engages in governance, communicates with members, and represents MTSBA with professionalism.
6. We expect and support leadership that elevates the work of the Board and organization.
7. The Board and staff operate in active partnership to serve the long-term interests of our membership.
8. We commit the time and resources necessary to achieve outcomes aligned to our Core Purpose.
9. We intentionally build relationships that strengthen the organization and its effectiveness.
10. We continuously adapt to meet member needs and improve student outcomes.
11. We operate with trust and openness in all internal and member relationships.
12. We maintain ongoing professional development for Board and staff.
13. We lead advocacy efforts for public education and EACH child served by our membership.

### MTSBA Core Values:

**Visionary Leadership** - We embrace vision and innovation in all that we do, continually adapting to the changing needs, wants and preferences of our members.

**Advocacy** - We advocate for EACH child in EVERY public school in Montana.

**Empowered School Boards** - We empower community engaged, elected school boards in their Constitutional mission to fulfill the potential of each child.

**Member-Centric** - We understand, respect, and balance the interests of each of our members.

**Constitutional Guardian** - We guard and defend all Article X constitutional guarantees for each child.

**American Indian Peoples and Tribes** - We help our members preserve the history and cultural integrity of American Indian Peoples and Tribes.

14. We support members in advancing practices that develop the full potential of EACH child.
15. We ensure all programs and services align with our Core Purpose and Core Values
16. We govern as “representative of,” acting in the best interests of the organization as a whole.

*“Representative of”:* Board members who view their role as ensuring that the views, beliefs, values, and self-interests of the constituencies they know the best are on the table as part of the conversation. They voice interests and opinions of those they know best and vote on behalf of the best overall interests of the organization. We avoid a “representative for” model, by which board members see themselves as the elected representatives of a particular constituency. They voice only the self-interests and opinions of that constituency and vote only on behalf of that constituency’s interests.

## In Carrying Out our Work on Behalf of Our Members, the Montana School Boards Association:



**Sees the world through the eyes of the elected trustee and supports school boards** in developing the full potential of EACH child in every public school in Montana.



**Operates from a nonpartisan, member-driven approach**, determining positions based on alignment with member-adopted strategic priorities.



**Is driven by and aligned to its strategic plan, integrating strategy into all work.** Relies on engaged, knowledgeable, and selfless directors who serve the interests of all member districts.



**Works for the collective benefit of its members** while navigating diverse perspectives and needs.



**Works for the collective benefit of its members**, striving to create clarity and consensus regarding its key initiatives and exercising fairness and balance in addressing the diverse needs of our members.



**Executes its strategy through advocacy, services, and innovation**, demonstrating visionary leadership and striving for excellence.



**Guards the constitutional guarantees afforded children in Article X of the Montana Constitution, including:**

- The opportunity for each child to fulfill their educational potential;
- Access to a basic system of free, quality public schools that are adequately and equitably funded;
- A balanced governance structure among school boards, the Board of Public Education, and the Legislature;
- A commitment to preserving and understanding American Indian culture.



**Operates with transparency and trust**, ensuring access, accountability, and alignment with adopted principles.

## MTSBA Member-Adopted Principles and Guidelines:

### Principle I

Alignment of efforts and activities with the goal of developing the full educational potential of all the state's citizens while guaranteeing equality of educational opportunity to each person of the state

### Principle II

Recognition of the shared authority for education between the community, locally elected school boards, and the bodies with constitutional authority and responsibility for education, including the Governor, the Montana Board of Public Education, and the Legislature

### Principle III

Equality of Educational Opportunity for each person of the state

### Principle IV

Recognition and commitment to the preservation of the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians

### Principle V

Balance between Church and State

### Principle VI

Collaboration among and with our locally elected school boards



## About the Impressive Contributions of our Members

The founding of Montana's public schools pre-dates Montana's statehood by 25 years.

**Creation of a system of public schools was one of the first actions of the First Montana Territorial Legislative Assembly in 1864.**

Since the first public school opened in Virginia City in 1865, **Montana's public schools have been preparing Montana children for a future of success over the last 150 years**, governed by community-elected trustees all along the way.

**Over 1,450**

**elected trustees in Montana volunteer nearly 750,000 hours** each year in pursuit of increased student achievement, taking on complex and sometimes controversial challenges **with no compensation whatsoever.**

The **combined annual volunteer service of our members would take an individual 86 continuous years, working 24 hours per day**, to match.

When we say that our members provide a lifetime of service each year, we mean that literally.

Our members' annual contributions are **equivalent to 360 FTE positions provided free of charge each year**, providing taxpayers **over \$14 million in savings each year** compared to what those positions would cost if filled by employees.

Our **members oversee the employment of over 25,000 public employees** who educate, support, transport supervise, feed and protect the safety of over **155,000+ children**, in virtually every community in the state, every day of the week throughout the school year.

Our boards govern for **excellence and efficiency in equal measures** and the results of their efforts speak for themselves.

Montana's public schools provide performance that compares favorably by any measure, nationally or even internationally and our **members deliver these results for below average costs** when compared to other states in our Nation.

Our members **ensure preservation and fulfillment of important constitutional guarantees afforded Montana's citizens.**