

School Board Governance Top 10 Best Practices



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Who are your presenters?

Make Education a Priority Governance Consortium Members

Trustees:

- Dr. Aaron Reich, Arlington ISD
- Raul Gonzalez, Mansfield ISD
- Robert Seward, Mesquite ISD
- Gary Inmon, Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD

Why is Effective School Governance Important?

- Number of students affected
- Largest employer (community and state)
- Tax contributions (property)
- Our future depends on it

Who is Responsible for Effective School Board Governance?

- You Are!!!
 - The Texas Education Code (Sec. 11.151b) provides that school board trustees (as a corporate body) have the exclusive power and duty to govern and oversee the management of the public schools of the District.
 - Oath of Office: In the Name and by the Authority of the State of Texas, I _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the duties of the office of School Board Trustee of the State of Texas, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States and of this State, so help me God.

Promoting Effective School Board Governance

We are going to try our hardest to share best practices of effective boards of governance.

You will be able to advocate the value of strong governance and realize the full range of rewards of an effective governing board.

Foundation for Effective School Board Governance

Five principles of development under the Framework for School Board Development*

- Vision
- Structure
- Accountability
- Advocacy
- Unity

**** The Framework for School Board Development was approved by the SBOE to provide the critical areas of development for all public school boards. TEA website***

General Misunderstanding of Legislature v. Board of Trustees

- Political and partisan
- Us v. them
- Winner takes all
- Position / interest advocacy
- Extremism prevails

Key Points of Effective Governance

- Governance vs. Management
- Civility, Trust, and Respect
- Communication
- Mutual Accountability and Transparency
- Responsive

Key Points of Effective Governance - cont.

- Equitable and Inclusive
- Effective and Efficient
- Follows the Rule of Law
- Participatory and Relationships
- Consensus Oriented and Decision Making

Governance vs. Management

- **Governance** (view from 50,000')
 - leadership – check ego at the door
 - team approach
 - focus on common goals
 - passion for education
 - board members represent entire community
 - focus on children in serving their best interest
 - members represent all interests in district

Governance vs. Management

- Management
 - district CEO (Superintendent)
 - day to day operations
 - also works at governance level
 - communicates with each Board member to inform full Board on issues/strategic initiatives

Governance vs. Management

- Management – cont.
 - responsible to implement the vision developed by the Board/Admin team
 - a good Superintendent will advocate for the Board and a good Board will advocate for the Superintendent
 - open and transparent, no surprises

Civility, Trust, and Respect

- A gesture of civility and reason will go a long way toward addressing the ills of communication
- Relationships are built on respect
- Speak in respectful tone

Civility, Trust, and Respect

- Strive to find the truth and then tell truth
- Discuss issues and concepts, not people and personalities
- Behave responsibly

Scenario #1

There is a fellow trustee who often does not vote consistently with you or the majority. You discover that this trustee did not submit proper financial disclosure paperwork during the most recent election. What do you do?

- A. Contact the media (TV and newspaper) and encourage them to run a negative story re: the trustee.
- B. Personally, or through a "friend," share this information throughout social media, for example, Facebook , Twitter, etc..
- C. During the public comments portion of your next board meeting, assume the microphone and call for the trustee's immediate resignation from office.
- D. Inform the trustee of the "oversight" and have him/her submit the appropriate documentation.

Communication

- Establish a clear communication process
- Good communication occurs when the board works together effectively with
 - respect and understanding
 - listening to each other
 - taking time to consider others viewpoints
 - allowing the minority voice to have its say

Communication – cont.

- Effective communication requires trust
- Team members must be honest with each other and replace rumors with facts
- Open channels of communication must be constant

Scenario #2

You are Board President and have a trustee who always questions the Superintendent and whom you believe is opposed to extending his/her contract. The Superintendent's evaluation and contract extension should be on the agenda for next month. What do you do?

- A. Schedule the meeting on a different night/time when you know the trustee will be unable to attend
- B. Do not provide the trustee with an evaluation form because you know he/she will be negative anyway.
- C. Tell the trustee that if he/she doesn't vote to extend the Superintendent's contract, you will find someone to run against him/her at the next election.
- D. Respectfully encourage and support the trustee's opinion and input and determine whether or not the Board should evaluate further or take appropriate actions re the Superintendent.

Mutual Accountability and Transparency

- Pre-requisites
 - an agreed to set of operating rules
 - clarity regarding the roles of the members, board, committees, and the staff
 - skilled and informed board of trustees
 - a means of ensuring adequate information is available to plan, manage and govern

Mutual Accountability and Transparency – cont.

- Exchange and free flow of information
- Accessibility of information to those affected by decisions taken
- Demonstrating engagement
 - prepare for meetings
 - stay informed
 - attend board meetings

Responsive

- Citizens
 - timely delivery
 - redress of citizen grievance
- Refer through proper channels

Equitable and Inclusive

- Listening
- Equal opportunity for participation in decision making process

Effective and Efficient

- Optimum use of resources
- Competency in effective policymaking and implementation
- Competency and performance of staff
- Agenda management
- Results oriented

Follows the Rule of Law

- Consistently uphold all applicable
 - laws
 - policies, and
 - governance procedures
- Hold confidential all matters and information that is privileged under law
- Ask what “shall” vs. “may” the board do by law

Participatory and Relationships

- Cornerstone of Good Governance:
 - opportunity for all to participate in decision making, implementation and monitoring of governing activities
 - freedom of expression and association, organized civil society
- Function as a team

Consensus Oriented and Decision Making

- Mediation of different interests to reach broad consensus
 - what is in best interest of students and district
 - how can this be achieved
- Stresses group members working together to cooperatively develop a decision

Consensus Oriented and Decision Making – cont.

- Collective Nature of Board
 - work as a team
 - bear responsibility
 - board’s power comes from collective action
 - no individual power
- Goal is group unity, not majority of votes
- Every member is considered important

In Conclusion

- If one could distill the essence of good governance down to one thought, it would be doing what is right (for the children).
 - above self-interest
 - above personal constituent or vendor relationships
 - focus on long-term policy impact
 - focus on budget/fiscal responsibility

Links:

To MEaP website: www.schoolpriority.com

Framework: www.tea.texas.gov



Action Steps

- Perform annual self-audit (expand to staff/community)
- Develop effective Superintendent evaluation instruments/process
- Create goals and action plan for the Board of Trustees
- Establish Board Operating Procedures

Right Makes Might

“Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare do our duty as we understand it.”

-- Abraham Lincoln*

* (in his February 1860 address to the Cooper Institute)

Thank you!



Our Vision is Working Together for All Students in Public Education.

Questions?



The Mission is to foster public education opportunities for all students through partnerships, engagement and advocacy.

Full version of Power Point in *after-conference resources* on SLI web page