

# Board & Administrator

FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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## Tight finances are a fact of life for districts

These are not flush financial times. When the district faces cutbacks and hard financial choices, will board members start pointing fingers at each other or the superintendent; or will the board commit to working together with the administrator to guide the district out of any problems?

Keep the following strategies in mind for working through financial struggles this school year:

- **Don't allow money trouble to damage teamwork.** Budget shortfalls can lead to board infighting. Don't let financial difficulties damage the board and superintendent team or lead to public attacks on one another.

- **Seek other viewpoints.** Community stakeholders feel the effects of a tough economy. Reach out to those in the business community that have

been through staff reductions, for example, for suggestions.

- **Develop clear, consistent district messages about school finance.** The board and superintendent team should agree to and adhere to a message and emphasize transparency about the district's financial issues.

- **Employ creativity.** This mindset will help the board and staff develop creative program solutions. If you are facing deep cuts in the vocational education program, for example, consider partnerships that involve a university or community college, and local business and industry to keep opportunities open for students.

- **Offer expertise, passion where you can.** If the superintendent and staff are seeking ideas in an area you have specific knowledge, be prepared to offer your help. ■

## Set expectation for time on ad hoc committees

School boards establish ad hoc committees to accomplish a specific goal. That goal may be to improve upon the districts ongoing efforts to implement an equity and anti-racist agenda throughout our schools, to scrutinizing the school system's special education practices, or to recommending a process for selecting a superintendent for a

schools merger. The superintendent may appoint a representative from district administration to work with the committee. The board and superintendent should communicate regarding the use of that representative's time and involvement on the committee. Establish parameters of that members participation on the committee early. ■

# Communicate constituent concerns to the superintendent

As a school board member, you occupy a prominent position in the community. Because of this, the public may often call your attention to potential issues in the operation of the school district. This is especially true now when parents and advocates are worried about the COVID-19 pandemic and students' access to in-person and remote educational services.

When the school board faces a constituent request, it must be responsive to the individual's concerns and needs. At the same time, school

board members must keep in mind that certain concerns, such as those related to personnel and school management, should be resolved by the superintendent. So what should a board member do?

No matter how much pressure a constituent applies, the proper board response is to notify the appropriate person in the district's chain of command and stay out of it.

Use the Action Inquiry/Request Form below to route constituent issues to the superintendent or other appropriate district official. ■

## Action Inquiry/Request Form

Directions: When constituents raise concerns about management issues to the school board, a board member should complete the following request form and forward it to the superintendent. The superintendent will then route the request to the appropriate department for action. When the concern has been addressed, the superintendent or other appropriate official should complete the form and submit it to the school board.

### Constituent Concern

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of district official to whom the concern is addressed)

From: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of the board member who filled out the form)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of constituent concern:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Department Response

Assessment of constituent concern:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Action taken:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of resolution: \_\_\_\_\_

### Superintendent's Comments

Reference to policy/regulation at issue:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Report/comments on specific actions taken:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of report: \_\_\_\_\_