

Board & Administrator

FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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Board should only rarely meet without superintendent

Betsy Miller-Jones, executive director for the Oregon School Boards Association, said the only time the board should meet without its current superintendent is to discuss the superintendent's evaluation to come to a consensus on the message the board will deliver to the administrator.

"This is particularly important when the board is split in some areas of the evaluation," Miller-Jones said.

Once the superintendent has resigned from a district, there may be scenarios where the board would meet without the administrator. "The board may want to ask the superintendent not to influence the search process for the next superintendent," Miller-Jones said. In that case, the board may wish to speak without the superintendent present, she said.

Legal action by the district against the superin-

tendent would be the other reason for the board to meet without the superintendent present, as the board may need to discuss the matter with legal counsel.

"Other than that, there should not be any meetings of the board without the superintendent," Miller-Jones said. "It's a sign of lack of trust if the board needs to discuss board governance work and not include its superintendent."

Miller-Jones said the board and superintendent need to act as a single team during all matters of governance discussions.

"If it happens, a big downside is that the board may have discussions in the meeting that they fail to accurately communicate to the superintendent, but you can bet they will still hold the superintendent responsible for implementing what the board wants done, and that is trouble right there," she said. ■

Work closely with 'stick in the mud' board member so that meetings don't come to a halt

If the board has a trustee who says no to pretty much everything, the president should make special efforts to reach him.

The board can't afford to table every issue while working its way to consensus.

The president should take that board member

aside and simply ask what is bothering him.

Sometimes you'll find that the board member was having a particularly bad day. And by initiating a conversation, the president can dig deeper into the issues that are bothering the "just say no" board member. ■

Prepare for board meetings

If board members come to meetings unprepared, they will bog down the entire board. Board members should receive the agenda packet from the superintendent well in advance of the meeting; yet there may still be some members who can't get around to reading it.

If these same board members were going into a meeting at their own place of business, they

wouldn't dream of being this unprepared.

Preparedness is really an issue of board member commitment to board service. Consider creating a commitment pledge that outlines the expectations the board has of its members. This tool can be used during the orientation of board candidates, new members, and as a refresher for the board on an annual basis.

Commitment to serve

My commitment:

* I establish as a high priority my attendance at all meetings of the board and committees on which I serve.

* I will come to meetings prepared to contribute to the discussion of issues and business to be addressed at scheduled meetings, having read the agenda and all background support material relevant to the meeting.

* I will observe parliamentary procedure and display courteous conduct in all board and committee meetings.

* I will not intrude in administrative issues that are the responsibility of the superintendent, except to monitor the results.

* I will avoid conflicts of interest between my position as a board member and my personal and professional life. I will declare any such conflict before the board and refrain from voting on all matters on which I have a conflict.

* I pledge to support in a positive manner all actions taken by the board, even when I am in a minority position on such actions.

* I will speak for the full board only when authorized by the board to do so.

Signature

Date

Hostile board members require special approach

A board member who insists his way is the only way, dominates meetings, and openly laughs at the staff's recommendations can be a handful for any board president. If the board team must work with an individual like this, the president should act to control his outbursts.

Propose a new rule that allows each member to make one comment or express one idea on any single agenda item. Go around the meeting table and ask each member for their thoughts. Once you

have been around the table, repeat the process by allowing more thoughts on an issue.

With this approach, the domineering board member will receive 30-45 seconds to express himself and will then be forced to wait to speak again.

The board will also make better decisions because this tactic allows all board members to fully participate in decision-making, rather than being cowed by a bully. ■

Simplify your approach to parliamentary procedure

Because it is oriented to large boards, the Arizona School Boards Association does not recommend school boards formally adopt *Robert's Rules of Order*. The ASBA suggests adopting a simplified version of procedures for use during meetings:

* All motions require a second.

* Only one main motion can be active at a time.

* The board president runs the meeting, in-

troduces the item, recognizes speakers, repeats the motion before the vote, and summarizes the vote.

* The president can make motions, second motions, and vote on all motions.

For more information, visit www.azsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Rules-of-Order-During-a-Meeting1.pdf. ■