

Board & Administrator

FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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Editor: Jeff Stratton

President should end meeting digression

When board discussion wanders, board meetings can drag on and on. That can lead to poor board decisions. Here are three ways for the president to better control meeting discussion:

1. A president's reminder. As president, let a long-winded speaker finish what she is saying, but then issue a reminder and direct the discussion back to the subject at hand.

2. Nip the problem in the bud. When everyone has something to say, remind the team that the president will give everyone a chance to speak, but that he will call on each person first.

3. Be ruthless about your meeting agenda. If a board member raises a new topic unrelated to the agenda, the president should suggest making an agenda request for a future meeting. ■

Avoid these common problems in superintendent evaluation

When the board gives the superintendent an evaluation, it's easy to fall into some traps. Here are five of them you don't want to stumble over:

1. Undo focus on a good or bad incident. It is easy to get hung up on a single issue, such as an employee complaint, and spend too much time on it.

2. Focus only on recent performance. This can happen if the board doesn't remind itself that the evaluation covers a full year. Keep a file full

of communication from the superintendent over the course of the year as a reminder.

3. Personal agendas dominate. Work to keep the process objective.

4. The sprung evaluation. The superintendent should be given the opportunity to read the evaluation prior to meeting to discuss it.

5. Poor communication. The board should be communicating with the superintendent about performance during the course of the year. ■

Board member: Ask the right questions about school safety

The board is responsible for providing a safe learning environment in the schools. So the question becomes: How should the board go about achieving this?

The best approach is to perform the board's oversight responsibility and ask some questions:

1. Does the district have policies and procedures related to building security? Are they re-

viewed regularly?

2. Do individual schools have security policies?

3. Do board policies support training for staff in the areas of school safety? Do we budget for this?

By asking your superintendent for this type of information and engaging in discussion around these issues, the board performs its oversight function. ■

The board shouldn't meet without the superintendent

Barring a harassment claim filed against the superintendent or charges of financial malfeasance, the board is making a big mistake by calling an executive session and excluding the superintendent. That will only do serious damage to the relationship and district. Because:

- Closed sessions destroy any sense of trust between the board and superintendent. Trust and honesty are necessary to a healthy board-superintendent relationship.
- Closed sessions deny the superintendent a

chance to explain actions. A board that meets without its superintendent undermines the administrator's authority without ever learning why the superintendent's course of action was best for the district.

- Closed sessions ignore the board's most valuable resource -- the superintendent. No single person knows more about your district's day-to-day operations than the superintendent. You run the risk of unworkable board decisions when you make them without the administrator's input. ■

All staff communication should make its way to the superintendent

Board members should make the superintendent aware when an employee contacts them with a complaint. And in this day and age, with so many types of media available for communication, that can be a challenge.

Just remember that if an employee contacts you

by messaging, email, phone, face-to-face, or even video conferencing, the correct response is to ask, "Have you discussed this matter with the superintendent?"

Below, you will find a handy reminder on personnel responsibilities:

Area	Board	Superintendent
Hiring	Approves certain positions	Interviews, recommends
Staff assignments	No role	Establishes
Firing staff	No role	Makes final termination decision
Staff grievances	No role	Grievances stop with superintendent
Personnel policies	Adopts	Recommends and implements
Salaries	Approves budget	Approves salaries for individuals
Staff evaluation	Evaluates superintendent only	Evaluates all other staff ■

Work at clarifying roles through discussion

In "Clear Board and Superintendent Roles," the Association of Alaska School Boards identifies several problems that can occur between a board and superintendent if roles are not clear. These include tension and mistrust.

It doesn't have to be this way if the team works at clarifying roles.

"Roles of the board and superintendent need to be

clarified through discussions of the expectations and responsibilities for various tasks," said AASB. "If there is disagreement about the process or responsibilities, take the time to discuss each participant's perception of what has taken place in the past and what he or she thinks should take place in the future."

For information, <http://aasb.org/clear-board-and-superintendent-roles/>. ■