

# BOARD GOVERNANCE ESSENTIALS



Kristen Miles, Ed.D.

Director of Board Development,  
OSBA

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# Introductions

- Name
- Time on the board
- Where did you go to high school?
- Why are you on the board?
- What superpower do you bring to the board?

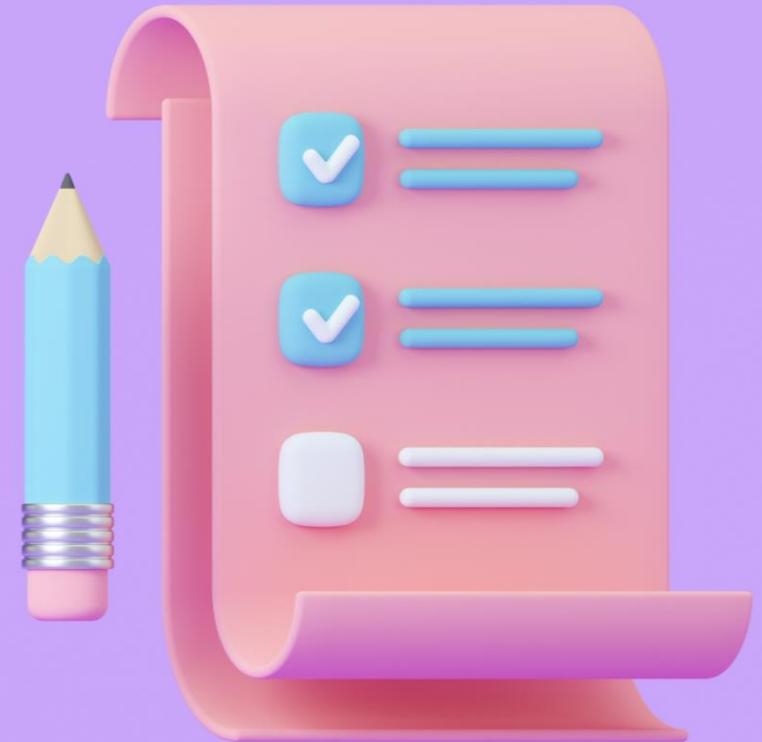


# Current successes and challenges



# Agenda

- Roles and responsibilities: high performing boards, risks of low-performing boards
- Balanced Governance standards and good governance
- Small group Balanced Governance activity
- Practice with scenarios
- Tools for collaboration
- Q&A



# Share out:

- Why does the board matter?
- Why does board culture matter?
- Why does your relationship with your superintendent matter?



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The single belief  
that ALL students  
can and will learn

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# School Boards Impact Students



**Individual board members**  
*(values, beliefs, motivations  
– your “why”)*



**Board work**  
*(roles, responsibilities,  
decision-making, focus)*



**Board culture**  
*(tone, trust, collaboration,  
accountability)*



**Organizational Culture**  
*(district-wide expectations,  
leadership alignment)*



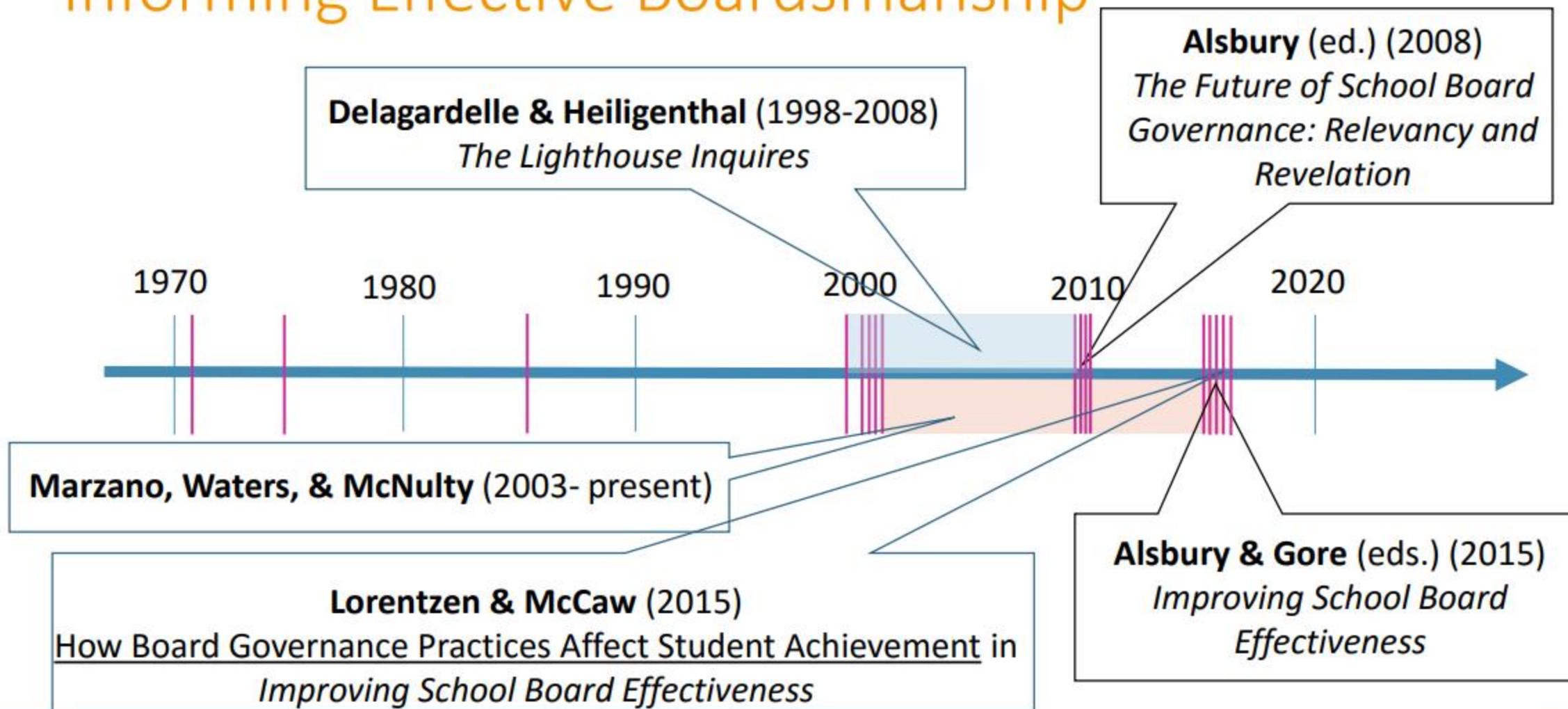
**Classroom Instruction**  
*(resources, priorities,  
support for staff, teachers)*



**Students**  
*(outcomes, achievement,  
success)*



# Chronology of Applicable Research Informing Effective Boardsmanship



# High-performing boards

	Lighthouse (Rice, et al., 2000 and Delagardelle & Alsbury, 2014)	Essential board leadership practices (Johnson, 2013)	Characteristics of effective school boards (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2016)
<b>Vision &amp; Goals</b>	Set <b>clear expectations</b> ; set goals	Creating a <b>vision</b>	Commit to a <b>vision of high expectations</b> for students and set goals toward that vision
<b>Climate &amp; Resources</b>	Create <b>conditions for success</b>	Creating climate; providing staff development; creating awareness and <b>urgency</b>	<b>Align and sustain resources</b> to meet goals
<b>Data &amp; Monitoring</b>	Hold the system <b>accountable</b>	<b>Monitoring progress</b> and taking corrective action; using data	<b>Data savvy</b> , embracing and monitoring data, even when negative
<b>Cohesive Teaming</b>	<b>Learn together</b> as a board team	Demonstrating commitment; practicing <b>unified governance</b>	Strong <b>shared beliefs and values</b> about the system and all students
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<b>Build public will</b>	<b>Engaging the community</b> , connecting with district leadership	<b>Collaborative relationship</b> with staff and community; strong structure to inform/engage stakeholders
<b>Policy &amp; Accountability</b>		Developing <b>policy with a focus on student learning</b>	<b>Accountability driven</b> , focused on policy and not operations

# Practices associated with negative impacts on student outcomes

## Lee & Eadens (2014)

- Meetings less orderly; Lack of respectful engagement, some individuals take up too much airtime
- Less time spent on student achievement
- Members seek to advance their own agendas
- Less effective working relationships
- Less reliance on the administrator for advice and input
- Less focus on policy items

## Dervarics & O'Brien (2016)

- Only vaguely aware of school improvement initiatives
- Making excuses: external pressures, communication, teachers/staff, families, students as cause for lower performance
- Micromanagement
- Staff don't know the board
- Anecdotes and personal experiences drive decisions instead of data

# Governance and Management

## Governance

- Policy
- Budget adoption
- Program adoption
- Curriculum adoption
- Community engagement
- Informed oversight/monitoring

## Management

- ARs/policy implementation
- Budget spending
- Program implementation
- Curriculum recommendation
- Community engagement
- Providing data and information



So how do we get there?

# Balanced Governance



## Balanced Governance: Evidence-based standards of performance

*(T. Alsbury, Balanced Governance School Board Self-Assessment)*

Standard	Description	What it Looks Like
<b>1. Vision-directed planning</b>	Engage staff and community in development of a shared vision focused on student learning	Vision is clear, shared, and student-focused. All decisions connect to long-term goals. Board regularly monitors progress.
<b>2. Community engagement</b>	Recognize that all members of the community are invested partners. Support collaborative relationships.	Board actively listens to diverse voices. Feedback influences decisions. Engagement is ongoing, not one-time.
<b>3. Effective leadership</b>	Establish focus, direction, and expectations that foster student learning. Align authority and responsibility so decisions can be made at the most local level.	Board focuses on student outcomes, respects roles, and holds itself accountable to agreements.
<b>4. Accountability</b>	High expectations for the learning of every student and holds the district accountable for reaching those results. Policy and resources align with the strategic vision and goals.	Goals are measurable and monitored. Data is used to ask questions, adjust direction, and ensure progress.

## Balanced Governance: Evidence-based standards of performance

*(T. Alsbury, Balanced Governance School Board Self-Assessment)*

Standard	Description	What it Looks Like
<b>5. Using data for continuous improvement</b>	Use meaningful, quality data from multiple sources to set priorities and monitor improvement and progress.	Board uses clear, relevant data to guide decisions and evaluate program impact.
<b>6. Cultural responsiveness</b>	Recognize cultural diversity in many facets: race, gender, geographic, sexual orientation, gender identification, socioeconomic, students with special needs. Reduce and eliminate barriers to access for all students. Apply diverse perspectives to policy and program approvals.	Equity lens is applied to decisions. Board reviews disaggregated data and elevates underrepresented voices.
<b>7. Culture and climate</b>	Create a climate of expectations that all students can learn. Support policies and procedures that foster a positive and safe learning environment. Model professional and respectful relationships.	Board models respect, recognizes success, and ensures a safe, inclusive environment for all.
<b>8. Learning organization</b>	Ensure the district functions as a self-renewing professional community that supports reflection, discovery, improvement, and success at all levels. Encourage professional development and nurture leadership capabilities across the organization.	Board supports staff learning and uses reflection to guide continuous improvement.

## Balanced Governance: Evidence-based standards of performance

*(T. Alsbury, Balanced Governance School Board Self-Assessment)*

Standard	Description	What it Looks Like
<b>9. Systems thinking</b>	Practice an integrated view of education within and across systems and levels. Seek out collaborative local, state, and national partnerships, coordinated programs, and shared resource models to improve student experience.	Board considers long-term impact and cross-department effects of decisions.
<b>10. Innovation and creativity</b>	Encourage innovation and creativity as assets to development of positive change leading to new types of thinking.	Board supports new ideas with clear goals and reviews impact before expanding.
<b>11. Board member conduct, ethics, and relationship with the superintendent</b>	Have a clear, mutual understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent.	Roles are clear. Communication is respectful, timely, and follows agreed protocols.
<b>12. Budgeting and financial accountability</b>	Align the strategic goals of the district to budget priorities and ensure the district is fiscally sound. Allocate resources based on student needs, district policy, and strategic initiatives and priorities.	Budget aligns with board priorities. Spending is tracked, transparent, and student-focused.



Balanced Governance  
standards activity

# Insights

## Group 1

Strength

Growth Opportunity

Key Insight

## Group 2

Strength

Growth Opportunity

Key Insight

Can the board impact the superintendent's leadership?



# Inspirational motivation: alignment to standards

## Community engagement

- Advisory committees
- Admin/teachers involve families
- Strategic decision-making

## Using data for continuous improvement

- Multiple sources of high-quality data
- Growth metrics
- Show gaps and opportunities

## Cultural responsiveness

- Celebration of diversity
- Students see themselves in curriculum
- Equity lens

# Supporting the superintendent

- Quarterly check-ins (evaluation process)
- Stay informed about strategic priorities; ask non-operational questions
- Public-facing support for district initiatives (at board meetings, with constituents)
- No surprises! Prepare your superintendent and their team for big questions you know you're going to ask at a board meeting
- Support the superintendent's time and energy – focus on just a few performance goals each year
- Publicly celebrate successes
- A cohesive board provides stability and consistency
- The superintendent should not provide PD to the board



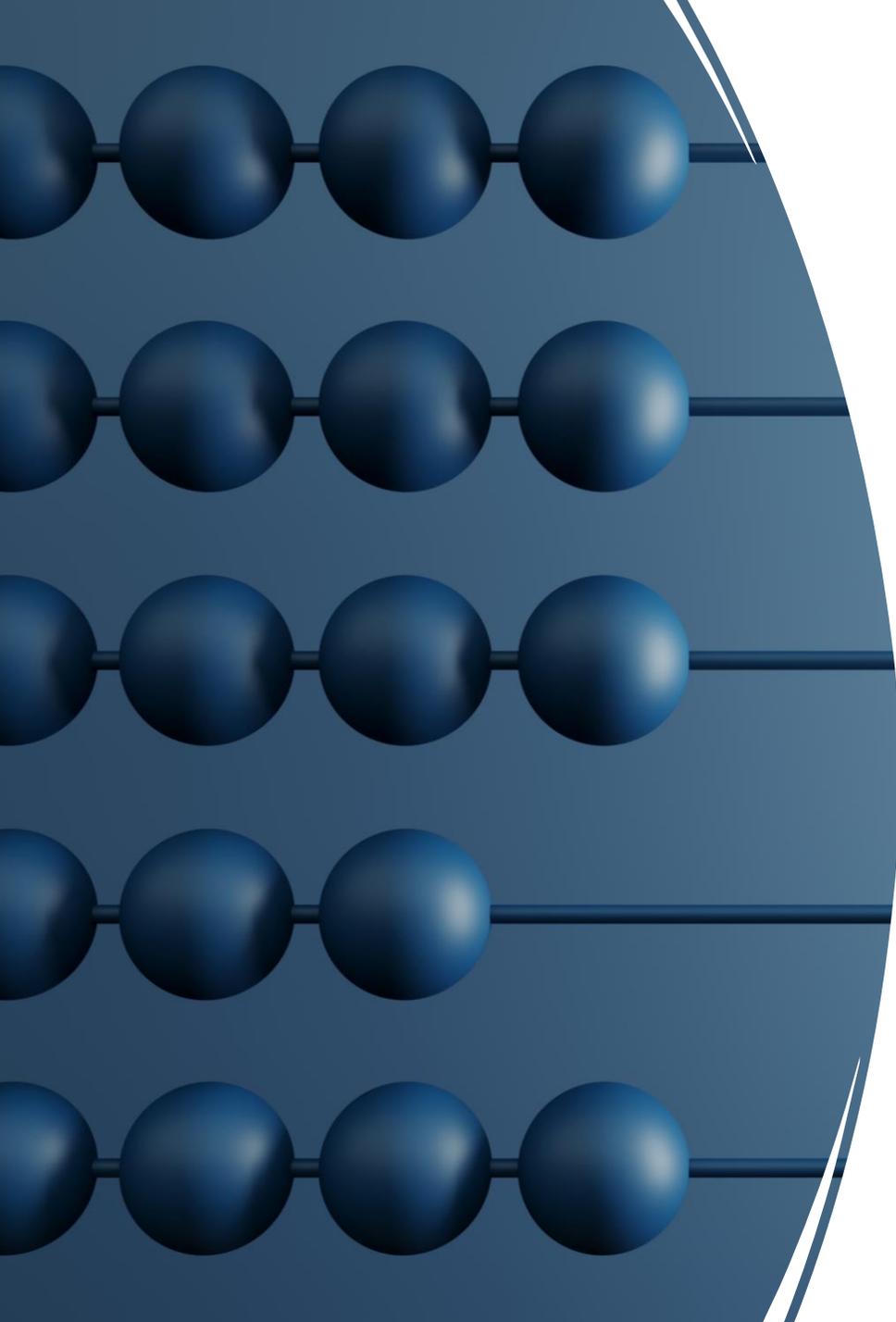
The image features a light green background with a subtle pattern of small, light-colored circles. In the foreground, there is a single, neatly folded paper airplane on the left side. To its right and slightly further back, there are approximately ten crumpled balls of white paper, scattered across the surface. The text "Practice Scenarios" is centered in the middle of the image, overlaid on the background and the crumpled paper.

# Practice Scenarios

# Scenario:

An upset staff member (who is also a parent) approaches you at the grocery store and asks if you can please help them with a complaint about their child's teacher. Their student's teacher has been assessing/grading them punitively and the staff member believes it is retaliation for a tough parent-teacher conference from earlier in the year. They mention they have tried connecting with the teacher and have been unsuccessful, and now they fear retaliation in their own job.

- What do you as a board member do in this situation?



# Scenario:

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A board member posts a question on Facebook asking for input on a math teacher's behavior. She states that her daughter is upset because of the way the teacher runs the classroom and wants to know if others are having the same concerns. She makes herself available for questions by text, email, and social media. She goes to the superintendent and tells them the concerns, wanting something to change immediately. She also emails other board members for their input. She tells the superintendent that if they do not deal with it, she will bring it up at the next board meeting.

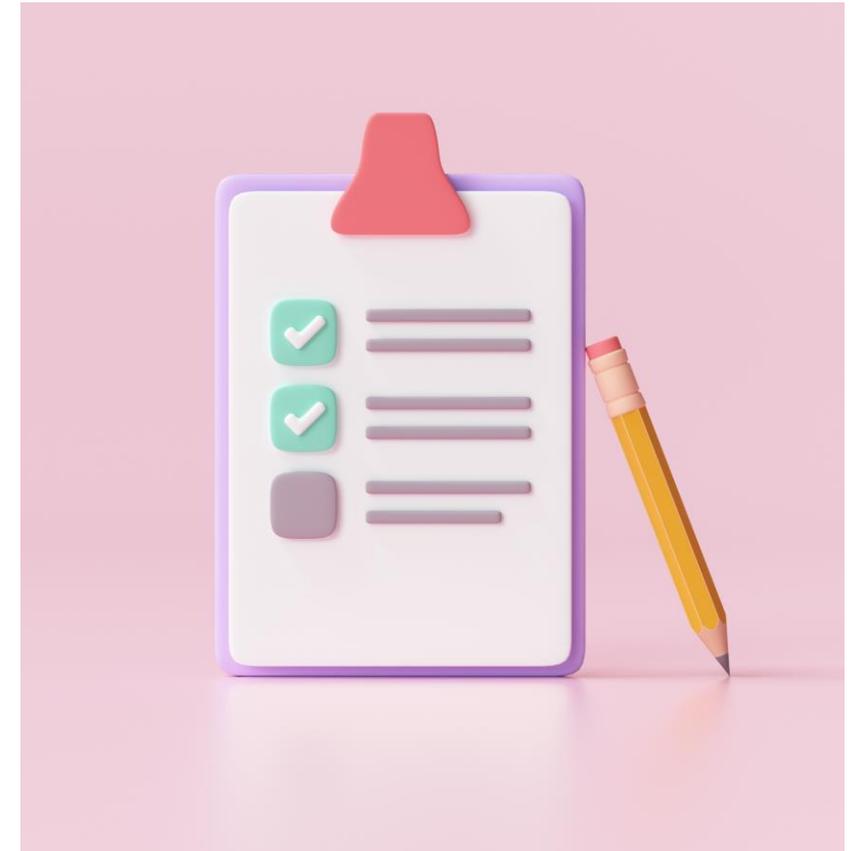
What do board members do when they have a concern?

# Scenario:

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A board member receives several phone calls from people in the community complaining because the district has non-renewed a well-liked teacher. The board member is familiar with this teacher and believes they have done a good job. The board member indicates to community members that they will personally investigate the situation. While discussing the issue with the superintendent the board member requests to see all the information relevant to the dismissal. The superintendent denies the request and the board member states that they have a right to this information.

What information do board members have access to (in general) and from whom?





## **Public meetings law**

- Communication outside meetings
- Email, text, social media
- Public records

# Whole board and individual board members

## Policy BBA: Board Powers and Duties (2017)

- Establish rules and policy consistent with state and federal rules and laws
- Keep itself and the public informed
- Act as a “court of appeal” when issues involved the board or policy
- Appoint and evaluate a superintendent
- Establish academic and financial goals
- Oversee the district’s financial affairs
- Adopt a budget and propose tax levies and bond elections
- Authorize the superintendent to approve payments on contracts according to policy and other requirements
- Provide for an annual audit
- Employ staff and provide for regular evaluations
- Direct the collective bargaining process
- Establish salaries, salary schedules, and other personnel policies

## Policy BBAA: Individual Board Members’ Authority and Responsibilities (2024)

- Authority and responsibility when in legal session only
- Can act in the name of the board when authorized by vote of the board
- May make and accept proposals when acting as a designated rep in bargaining
- Identify personal opinions as one’s own; may endorse candidates as an individual
- Be knowledgeable about the district’s activities
- Request information through superintendent; requests requiring additional expense will be submitted to the board
- Request legal advice that incurs expenses through a vote of the board. Requests involving superintendent’s employment or performance are made to the chair
- Convey complaints to the superintendent
- May not direct the superintendent
- May visit schools to gain information
- May not obligate the district via contract; will be personally liable

# Scenario:

The board is having a discussion at a board meeting. Community members are interrupting the board, accusing some board members that they are not “putting kids first” with their decision. During public comment, people are regularly going over the three-minute allotted time and identifying people by name.

- What are some tools/processes boards can adopt in situations like these?
- Overall, how can the board make the community feel heard without engaging in dialogue at a board meeting AND keep within their governance role?



# Scenario

The previous scenario described a situation in which the board meeting was being disrupted, and some community members were criticizing the board's decision as "not putting kids first." Some board members agreed with this comment and stated their intent to vote against the motion in front of them. Others felt the proposal was the right decision. All board members felt that they were, indeed, *putting kids first* but found themselves in conflict about the potential outcome of a decision.

- How can the board address its conflict while finding common ground?
- How can the board ensure decorum and respect during disagreement?
- What are the benefits of disagreement at the board table?

A glowing lightbulb hangs from a cord against a dark background. The lightbulb is illuminated from within, casting a warm, yellow glow. The background is filled with many other unlit lightbulbs, creating a sense of depth and repetition. The text "Your scenarios?" is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

**Your scenarios?**

# Tools for collaboration

- Superintendent evaluation
- Board self-assessment
- Board operating agreement
- Board/superintendent operating agreement
- Communication protocols



# Superintendent evaluation process

- Standards
- Goals
- Evidence of performance
  - Quarterly check-ins
  - Self-evaluation
  - Portfolio
- Targeted Feedback Survey (optional)
- Formal evaluation

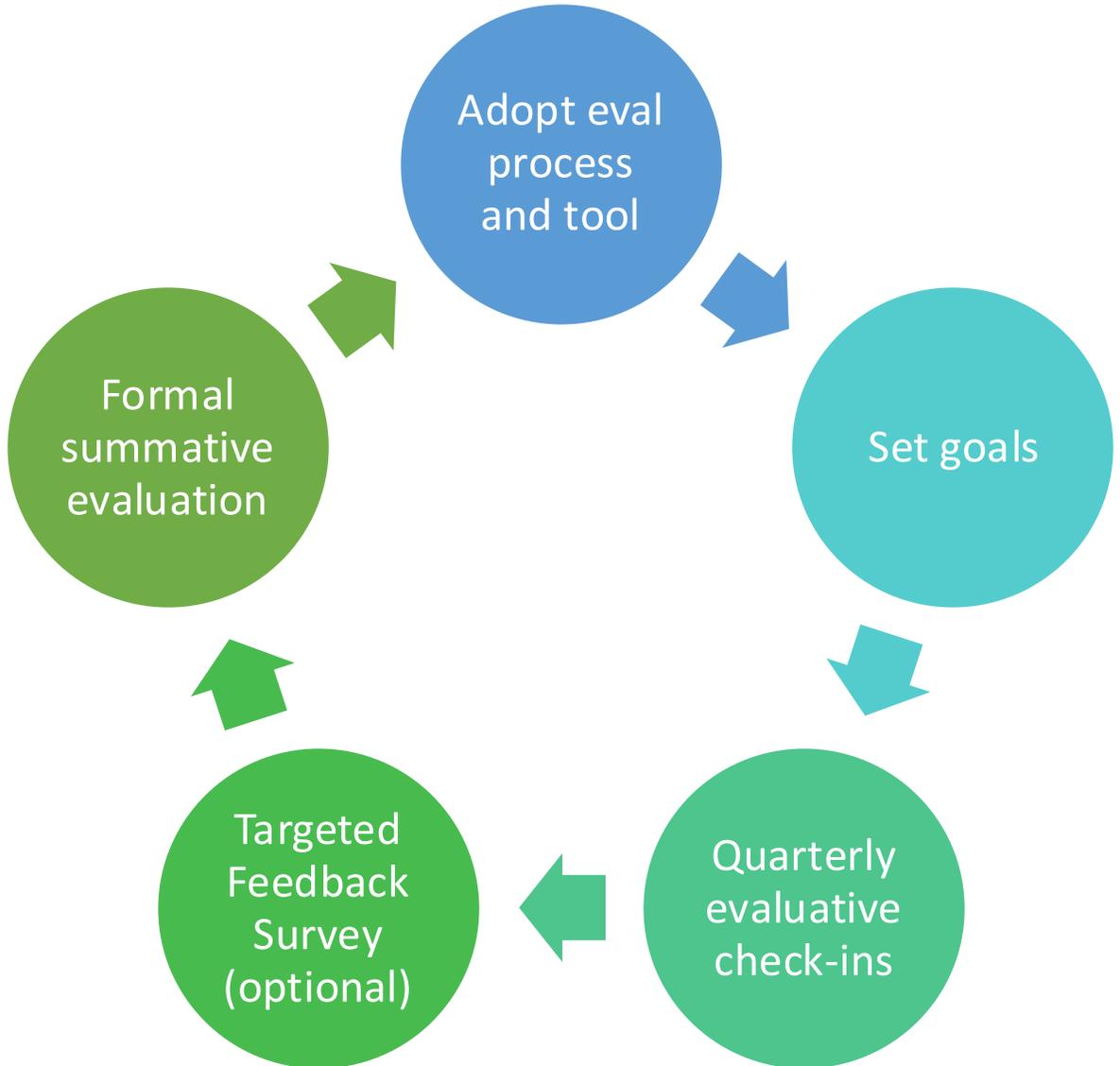
# Standards

- Visionary district leadership
  - Collaborative with the board, inclusion of community, implements strategic priorities and reports back
- Ethics and professional norms
  - Ethical, fair, just, transparent and models this behavior
- Inclusive district culture
  - Develops a supportive, inclusive culture, evaluates and advocates for instruction and supports to underscore this
- Culturally responsive instructional leadership and improvement
  - Evaluates and designs systems of instruction and support that are culturally responsive, ensures that staff are trained

# Standards

- Communications and community relations
  - Develops systems and engages with multiple constituencies and partners
- Effective organizational management
  - Strong hiring and retention practices, good systems thinking, productive relationships with unions
- Effective financial management
  - Budget aligns with strategic priorities and is well managed
- Policy, governance, and advocacy
  - Advocates for the needs of the district, good relationship with the board, knowledgeable of laws and regulations impacting the district

# Timeline





# Board self-evaluation

# Process and outcomes

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- Individual responses based on Balanced Governance standards
- Consultant compiles report and analysis
- Look at:
  - Overall strengths
  - Overall areas of improvement
  - Specific strengths
  - Specific areas of improvement
  - Areas of incongruence
- Goal-setting



Board/superintendent operating agreement

# BOARD – SUPERINTENDENT OPERATING AGREEMENT SAMPLE

## PURPOSE:

The Board of Directors is the educational policymaking body for (organization). To effectively meet the system's challenges the School Board and Superintendent must function together as a leadership team. To ensure unity among team members, effective group agreements must be in place. The following are the group agreements for the Board and Superintendent.

## COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE:

1. Members of the Board and the Superintendent shall work together as a team; modeling lifelong learning and collaboration.
2. Board members shall recognize and respect the Superintendent's responsibility to manage the school district and to direct employees in district and school matters.
3. Board members shall give careful consideration, listening to all perspectives, to all issues brought to the board by individuals and district leadership.
4. The Board shall make decisions only at properly called meetings. Board members recognize that individual members have no authority to take individual action in policy or district and school administrative matters, unless so authorized by board vote.

## COMMUNICATION AGREEMENTS:

1. Board members shall follow the chain-of-command and communicate directly with the Superintendent when a question arises, or a concern or complaint is voiced by a staff member, student, parent or community member.
2. Board Members shall communicate directly with the Superintendent or Board Chair prior to meetings of the board to address questions and/or concerns about agenda items.
3. Board members and the Superintendent shall communicate one-on-one, when an individual concern arises, with any member of the board-superintendent team as appropriate.

## BOARD EXPECTATIONS OF THE SUPT:

1. Identify one and place here.
2. Identify one and place here.
3. Identify one and place here.
4. Identify one and place here.
5. Identify one and place here.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S EXPECTATIONS OF THE BOARD:

1. Identify one and place here.
2. Identify one and place here.
3. Identify one and place here.
4. Identify one and place here.
5. Identify one and place here.

## SIGNATURES OF AGREEMENT:

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**OREGON SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION**

1201 Court St NE, Ste 400 | Salem, OR 97301 | 503-588-2800 or 800-578-6722

[www.osba.org](http://www.osba.org) | [info@osba.org](mailto:info@osba.org) | rev 6/2019

What are the highest leverage tools  
your board can use to impact  
student outcomes?





# Tools/Resources





English

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The Oregon School Boards Association is dedicated to improving student success and education equity through advocacy, leadership and service to Oregon public school boards.



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Telling students' stories; changing Oregon's narrative.

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## Access Services Exclusive to OSBA Members



### PACE- Property and Casualty Coverage for Education

Information about the governance structure of OSBA

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### Board Development Services

Listing of OSBA staff with contact information, biographies, and photos.

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To promote quality education for all students, focusing on the needs of students of color.

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### Policy Services

A committee, elected by the membership, that develops the OSBA's legislative policies and priorities.

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### Communication Services

Benefits of membership at OSBA.

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### Legislative Services

OSBA's Bylaws, OSBA's Policies, and the Map of Regions is located here.

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# NEWSCLIPS

OSBA compiles education-related news from sources around the state. Because newspapers change their web content regularly, the links below may not work beyond the day we send them.

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## STATE AND NATIONAL

### OREGON PUBLIC BROADCASTING

[Superintendent on Oregon coast put on paid leave pending investigation](#)

### OREGON CAPITAL CHRONICLE

[STATUS CHECK: Where key legislative bills are on week 5](#)

### EDUCATION WEEK\*

[After-School Programs Are Low on Staff, Leaving Students Unsupervised and Underserved](#)

[How Schools Can Prevent Costly Cyberattacks \(Video\)](#)

## CENTRAL OREGON

### BEND - THE BULLETIN\*

[New funds focused on bolstering Central Oregon Community College public health programs, regional workforce](#)

## EASTERN OREGON

### BAKER CITY HERALD\*

[Baker School Board hires Erin Lair as superintendent](#)

## PORTLAND AREA

### PORTLAND TRIBUNE\*

[Gresham-Barlow School Board names superintendent](#)

# OREDNEWS

### OREGON CAPITAL CHRONICLE

[Legislature passes package to help boost the state's teacher workforce amid shortages](#)



Nearly \$100 million will be available for retention and recruitment, including bonuses and paying training costs

**News site names marked with an asterisk (\*) have paywalls and limit article views without a subscription.**

### EDUCATION WEEK\*

[Don't Forget the Adults: How Schools and Districts Can Support Educator Mental Health](#)

About a third of districts have added mental health services for staff, according to a national survey



### THE 74

[Why Learning Loss Is Prompting Educators to Rethink the Traditional School Calendar: Start Earlier, End Later, Extend Breaks for Remediation](#)

Washington is offering \$75,000 grants to school districts to examine modifying their calendars





# Board Development Team

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

**Kristen Miles**  
Director of Board  
Development

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BOARD DEVELOPMENT

**Janet Avila-Medina**  
Board Development  
Specialist

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BOARD DEVELOPMENT

**Vincent Adams**  
Board Development  
Specialist

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BOARD DEVELOPMENT

**Jennifer Nelson**  
Board Development  
Specialist

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BOARD DEVELOPMENT

**Reginald Glenn**  
Board Development  
Administrative Analyst

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What will the  
board do next?

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# Questions and discussion

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Please fill  
out our  
feedback  
survey!

