



Governance Topics

The Center for Reform of School Systems (CRSS) offers training to build strong and effective board/superintendent teams focused on creating school systems with high levels of student achievement. This training covers the following instructional topics through the Reform Governance® in Action program. New topics are developed as district needs are identified.

Good Governance

Team Building and Collaboration

Team Building and Collaboration focuses on the critical relationship among board members and between board members and the superintendent. This session identifies the political pressures that stress these working relationships. Specific attention is given to the policies and processes by which boards and superintendents carry out their work. As a result of this training, the board will have tools to both resolve conflict and to create the foundation for a strong working relationship. This team-building session is especially valuable when new board members are elected or a new superintendent is hired.

Board Meetings and Committees

Effective board meetings should reflect the board's commitment to student achievement and improve the public's perception of the district. In this session, districts examine their board meeting processes and committee structure and evaluate efficient and effective use of time. Boards will learn to focus on governance and not management. As a result of the work, boards will draft a board meeting policy designed to increase time spent on student achievement, decrease staff time spent on board meetings, and evaluate the district's committee structure.

Constituent Service

What is effective constituent service? How can the board deliver constituent service without micromanaging? What is the board's role and what is the superintendent's role? How can effective constituent service protocols aid in the

board's oversight function? As a result of this training, the board will be introduced to a model that will satisfy the expectations of the public, support effective management by the superintendent, and improve service to constituent groups.

Management Oversight

Boards must ensure that district employees and all of those engaged in district work follow all relevant laws in letter and spirit. But what is effective management oversight? What are the board's roles and responsibilities? And what is the difference between oversight and micromanagement? As a result of this training, the board will learn an effective management oversight system for ensuring the integrity and performance of major district business systems such as food service, technology, and transportation.

Financial Oversight

What is the board's role in budget development and how does it oversee financial operations and ensure that the district's finances are sound? Financial oversight is one of the board's highest priorities. As a result of this training, the board will understand that its responsibility for budget development centers on the integrity of the budget system, trend analysis of revenue and spending by functional area, formulas for funds allocation, and district priority setting. Boards will also learn how to oversee financial operations without being pulled into management and how to minimize financial risk by tracking key financial and other indicators.



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Change Leadership

Core Beliefs and Commitments

Core beliefs and commitments are the conceptual starting point for the work of a school board. Board member beliefs about children and their capacity for learning, the purposes of public education, the school effect, and the performance potential of the school district will drive student achievement. In this session, the board/superintendent team will develop (or revisit and recommit to) a clear statement of the board's core beliefs and commitments.

Theories of Action for Change

Core beliefs and commitments and a strategic plan are not sufficient for accelerating student achievement; a district needs to articulate its theory of action. A theory of action is a plan that articulates the major district change that will drive student performance. Examples of theories of action include aligned or managed instruction, performance-based empowerment, and charter schools. As a result of this training, the board/superintendent team will learn about various theories of action and reach consensus on the components of a theory of action for change that is best for their district.



Reform Policies

Reform policies are proactive policies to drive change in a district. They spring from the board's core beliefs and commitments, are driven by the board's theory of action for change, and are strategically aligned to support whole-systems change. As a result of this work, the board superintendent team will prioritize

the district's reform policies for the coming year and develop work plans for each.

Data Dashboard

A district data dashboard provides the board with a limited number of key indicators to assess district performance. In this session, the CRSS associate will work with the board/superintendent team to develop the policy and select the indicators for a data dashboard. As a result of this session, the district will have consensus on the critical indicators

to track and report to the public in the areas of student achievement, district operations, and stakeholder/ community satisfaction.



Goals and Plans

Many school districts adopt goals to drive improvements in student achievement and operational efficiency. In this session, we will explore how goal-setting fits into Reform Governance[®] and how board-approved goals can effectively drive measurable improvements in the district's performance.

Superintendent Evaluation

Superintendent evaluations are one of the most powerful executive tools for school boards to drive performance for their district. Evaluations are key to enhancing the superintendent's leadership within the district and strengthening the board/ superintendent relationship. The work of this session is to establish a process for designing a superintendent evaluation that focuses on results and aligns with key indicators in the data dashboard and other goals set by the board for the superintendent.

The Search, Selection, and Signing of a Superintendent

Few jobs that a school board faces will be more challenging— or critical—than hiring a superintendent. We will explore what school boards need to do before even starting the search and what they need to know to select the right superintendent for their leadership team. We also will explore how the superintendent's contract should be negotiated to ensure maximum gains in the district's student achievement.

Board Self-Evaluation for Continuous Improvement

A strong board self-evaluation instrument will ensure that the board remains focused on district priorities and continuous improvement. In this training, the board will develop an evaluation process and tool that links the board's performance metrics with those of the superintendent and the district's data dashboard.

Building Civic Capacity and Broad Public Support

Reform Governance® means more than the practice of good governance and policy leadership for change. Every constituent group has a role to play in helping the board/superintendent team improve student performance. The governance team must establish open communication with the community and lead them to support change and planning for the future. Building civic capacity is crucial. In this session, the board/superintendent team will learn to build public support for the board's major work.

Sustaining the Reform Momentum

Effective school reform is not short-term. Nor is it the work of one board/superintendent team. It is the sustainable work of a succession of changing teams, all committed to improved student achievement and the ongoing monitoring of district performance. Boards working to sustain progress should respond to data by asking how policies, management systems, and leadership need to be adjusted or changed for continuous improvement. And they should use data to guide development of new reform policies. The goal of this session is to develop a process to manage the succession of board members, superintendents, and key staff. Boards also will develop an annual sustainability calendar and plan to monitor the district's reform progress.

Cost

The cost to the district is \$2,500 per half-day or \$4,500 per day, which covers materials, case studies, and the expertise of a CRSS faculty trainer. Costs associated with faculty travel, food, and lodging will be the district's responsibility, and the venue will be determined by the district.

The district may allocate district funds or raise local philanthropic funds to cover these costs. CRSS can provide materials for the district's use in fundraising efforts.

Having the Courage and Skills to be a Reform Leader

Consider this: it's not reform if it costs more! Inspired by *Cage-Busting Leadership* by Frederick Hess, this module prepares you with the knowledge, skills, and attitude it takes to be an agent for positive change. Resist the temptation to be discouraged by regulations and past practice; there are many battles that can be won right now. Knowing which battles to fight, and how and when to fight is the key. Also critical: Knowing how to improve teaching and learning with the resources you have.

21st-Century Teaching and Learning

Like it or not, the education world is changing. As governance team members, we need to understand this changing landscape filled with new ideas as well as old ideas modified for the digital age. Are these changes truly transformational or are they just more educational fads? And why do we even need to change? Why can't we just teach kids like we were taught? We examine these questions and showcase some of the more innovative learning approaches of our time.

Contact the Center for Reform of School Systems at www.crss.org or 713-682-9888.

