

Next Meeting: Monday, July 14, 2014
Committee-of-the-Whole: Finance 6:30 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting 7:30 p.m.
Jefferson School – Multipurpose Room
8200 Greendale Avenue
Niles, IL 60714

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Board of Education of Community Consolidated School District 64 Park Ridge-Niles will provide access to public meetings to persons with disabilities who request special accommodations. Any persons requiring special accommodations should contact the Director of Facility Management at (847) 318-4313 to arrange assistance or obtain information on accessibility. It is recommended that you contact the District, 3 business days prior to a school board meeting, so we can make every effort to accommodate you or provide for any special needs.

Board of Education Topics for Discussion



 COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT 64 Park Ridge-Niles

164 S. Prospect Avenue

Park Ridge, IL60068-4079

(847) 318-4300

FAX: (847) 318-4351

BOARD MEETINGS – 2013 -2014

JULY	8 (ESC)
AUGUST	26 (Meeting Location Moved to Field School – North Gym)
SEPTEMBER	23 (Roosevelt)
OCTOBER	28 (Washington)
NOVEMBER	18 (Carpenter)
DECEMBER	16 (Meeting Location Moved to Field School – South Gym)
JANUARY	28 (Jefferson) (Meeting Date Moved from January 27, 2014)
FEBRUARY	24 (Field)
MARCH	24 (Lincoln)
APRIL	28 (Franklin)
MAY	19 (Emerson)
JUNE	23 (Meeting Location Moved to Field School – North Gym)

Board of Education meetings are scheduled at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month with the following exceptions: July, November, December, and May.

REV.: 12/9/13

PB:mw



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BOARD MEETINGS – 2014 -2015

JULY	14 (Jefferson)
AUGUST	25 (Jefferson)
SEPTEMBER	22 (Roosevelt)
OCTOBER	27 (Field)
NOVEMBER	17 (Franklin)
DECEMBER	15 (Jefferson)
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PB:mw

Pros and Cons of Standing Committees

Pro

1. Allows more work to be done; no need/interest for all nine to consider each issue.
2. If an administrator is part of each subcommittee, it helps promote trust and understanding of the details/complexities of issues.
3. Comprehensive board policy can limit when and where subcommittees can meet.
4. Subcommittees just recommend action; it still takes five votes to approve, and subcommittees are not always unanimous in their recommendations.
5. Working with administrators in subcommittees allows board members to really find out what is going on in the system.
6. Subcommittees by board policy, can be open to all other board members and administrators who want to attend.
7. Subcommittees allow board members to get their teeth into areas that interest them and lead to a sense of accomplishment and worth in being an elected unpaid volunteer.
8. Subcommittees allow the board to explore many issues the full board would never get to.
9. Because subcommittees merely report and recommend, the full board can raise other issues the committee did not consider.
10. The majority of the board elects the president. By policy and/or custom, the president knows best how to staff standing committees.
11. It's good for a board with lots of new members because they all have an opportunity to learn quickly and in depth.

Con

12. Tends to get board members too involved in administrative detail and away from their role as policy makers. Details can be obtained from the administration.
13. Subcommittees lead to little "fiefdoms of power." Rubber stamp my committee's recommendations and I'll rubber stamp yours.
14. How does one find the time to schedule/attend the many subcommittee meetings?
15. Subcommittees are a way for board members to formulate policy without full debate.
16. Administrators on subcommittees are either afraid to speak candidly or use the board members for personal agenda items.
17. Subcommittees lead to development of cliques and board factions and can be used purposely to exclude administrative input.
18. To question a subcommittee report in public is to imply distrust and suspicion of motives and methods.
19. If board policy allows any member of the board to attend subcommittee meetings, why have subcommittees?
20. Subcommittees waste valuable time exploring issues which do not/will not have majority support.
21. Since a large percent of all subcommittee membership is determined at the discretion of the board president, the cards can be stacked before they are dealt.
22. It's bad for boards with lots of new members – they need time together to get to know and understand each other and learn to work as a team.

From *Coming to Order: A Guide to Successful School Board Meetings*

(IASB, 2011, page 59)

Board structure and committees

Although they are not specifically mentioned in *The School Code*, committees are popular with some school boards.

Committees appear to be most useful in gathering and summarizing information, identifying alternatives and making recommendations to the full board. However, a committee cannot be empowered to act for the board; its authority is limited to making recommendations or advising the board. A board has no authority to delegate its discretionary powers even to a committee of board members.

Any school board committee, regardless of who is on it and how many people are on it, must follow the *Open Meetings Act* the same way as the full board, (e.g., notice, agenda, minutes, etc.)

Standing board committees — Some school boards maintain permanent committees assigned to deal with such matters as finance, policy development, collective bargaining, buildings and grounds, or other functions. These committees typically consist of two or three board members.

Obviously, the committee system would not continue to exist if some school boards did not find them helpful. In fact, some boards contend that committees save time, especially where the board may feel compelled to perform some administrative functions.

In many districts, boards feel that any true board work deserves the attention of the full board and that a committee often creates duplication of effort. A board with this view might work as a committee of the whole but rarely in smaller standing committees.

Few observers argue with the value of temporary or special committees created to tackle major projects (discussed below). The value of many standing committees is questionable, however. Many of the functions assigned to standing committees are functions that could be handled with greater dispatch by the superintendent or other staff. Consequently, too many standing committees can be an indication that the board is doing staff work rather than board work or that it simply does not trust its own staff.

In considering whether to create a standing committee, the school board should ask itself these questions:

- Is the committee's purpose to address policy questions or perform administrative work?
- Is this a duty calling for the engagement and action of the full board?
- Will the full board benefit from the groundwork of this committee?
- Can the board avoid wasting time and energy on rehashing committee work?

Other standing committees — School boards also create standing committees made up of staff and citizens who are not members of the board. Some committees of this type are required by state law, including a parent teacher advisory committee on student discipline policy and a committee that addresses procedures for behavioral interventions for students with disabilities.

Committees created by the school board, including those mandated by law, are subject to the *Open Meetings Act* even when no member of the board sits on the committee.

Special or ad hoc committees — There are times when a special or temporary committee can prove useful, provided it is established for a specific purpose and with a predetermined life-span. After the committee has made its report and recommendations to the full board, it should be thanked and disbanded. The decision to create a special committee should be made with input from the superintendent to be sure board and staff roles and responsibilities are understood. The charge to the committee should be very clear, so that the committee does not misunderstand the extent of its authority.

Committee of the whole — A school board that wishes to discuss an issue without the pressure of making a decision may treat itself as a committee-of-the-whole. A meeting of a committee-of-the-whole provides an opportunity for board members to ask questions about issues under consideration but there is no voting. A meeting of a committee-of-the-whole is subject to the same requirements of the *Open Meetings Act* as any other regular or special meeting of the board.

Citizens advisory committees — School board governance requires solid connections with the community. One way to do this is through a citizens advisory committee. These board committees can be used to gather information about community aspirations for its children and its schools. Creating and working with citizens advisory committees has become a science that is beyond the scope of this book.

It must be noted here, however, that the role of any committee must be purely advisory to the board (or to the administration). Legally binding decisions may be made only by the board of education. Committee members must understand the advisory and temporary nature of their role from the outset.

Board committees vs. superintendent committees — Whenever a new committee is created, the district should be clear about whether it is the board 's committee or the superintendent's committee. There are no specific statutory definitions, but here are some guidelines to consider:

- Was the committee created by the board or the superintendent?
- Who appointed the committee members?
- Does the committee report to and advise the board or the superintendent?

Committees created to advise the school board – even when no board member sits on the committee -- must be treated as subject to the *Open Meetings Act*. Superintendent committees are generally not covered by the Act. However, if the superintendent committee contains three or more board members, it will be subject to the *Open Meetings Act*. Unusual circumstances could also make the Act apply. When in doubt, consult a school board attorney.

John Carver. *Officers and Committees. Boards That Make a Difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997. pages 155-167.

Committees

Board committees are to help get the board's job done, not to help with the staff's job. Like officers, committees should be established consonant with due care for minimalism, preservation of the CEO role, and holism: Have no more committees than absolutely needed; do not compromise the clear accountability linkage between the board and its CEO; disturb board wholeness as little as possible.

Minimalism.

Traditionally, we speak of boards and committees in the same breath. Boards are supposed to have committees, aren't they? Boards have told me they determined their size on the basis of how many members were needed for committees! And these were governing boards with nothing to do but govern; they did not need or use committees to make up for lack of staff. Committees can serve a useful function, but the propitious path is to start with no committees and add them only when clearly needed.

Even then, the choice to establish committees, no matter how intelligently made, is not simply a decision about ideal structure. There are no "right" committees to have, no list of correct subdivisions for getting a job done. Subdividing the board to get a job done is the personal preference of board members at the time. A particular mixture of persons may work better or worse in subgroups, depending on their personal characteristics. None of the common committees is indispensable; there is no one committee a board must have.

Preservation of the CEO Role

Board committees are established to aid the process of governance, not management. This simple rule safeguards the board-CEO accountability relationship. When board committees are assigned tasks that essentially oversee, become involved in, or advise on management functions, who is in charge of these activities becomes less clear. Personnel, executive, and finance committees are habitual offenders. The CEO role deteriorates as a result of their well-intended, official interference. The board's ability to hold the CEO accountable deteriorates apace.

Unfortunately, many board committees are actually designed to be involved in staff-level issues. This is bound to occur when the boards themselves are involved below their level. The problem seems even greater in committees than in full boards because of the belief that committees should be involved in details and because of the traditional committee assignments.

Level of Work. It is widely accepted that committees should delve into more detail than the board as a whole. To boards that insist on acting on staff-level issues, formation of a subgroup to work through the details may well make sense. To the extent to which boards extricate themselves from staff work to do board work, this need evaporates. If the committee is to help the board do its work, working at the lower level is neither appropriate nor helpful.

Committees should work at the board level. With respect to policy-making, the best contribution a committee can make is to prepare truly board-level policy issues for board deliberation. With respect to the non-policy-making aspects of a board's job (for example, linkage to ownership or fund raising), committees may deal with details, but not in areas that have been delegated to staff.

Topics. As in policy-making, there is no reason for boards to subgroup in categories that are appropriate to administration. When boards create committees with titles that duplicate staff functions, those committees can be expected to drift into staff work. Personnel committees automatically work at the staff personnel officer level. Finance committees usually slip into the same trap. A service committee dealing with a specific program will likely find itself dealing with staff-level management issues concerning that

program.

When a committee works at the staff level, the crisp board-CEO-staff chain of accountability disintegrates. Look at the relationship between the committee and affected staff. For whom does the staff work, the committee or the CEO? If the staff works for the CEO, then it cannot take direction from the committee (otherwise, the CEO can hardly be held accountable for the outcome); yet such direction, more or less subtle, does take place. If the staff works for the committee, then there is no true CEO because the board has chosen to delegate to staff through more than one channel.

Some boards have protested that such committees exist only to advise staff, thereby making good use of the special skills of board members. But advice to staff by committees— or even by the full board—is suspect. Although the offering of advice may be an honest intention, the staff are seldom so sure. In most of the cases I have observed, the first time this matter was explicitly considered was when I raised it. That is, the board had not seen fit to define committee-staff relationships. Boards may easily overlook the lack of clarity; staffs rarely escape its consequences. Staff are loath to treat committee input as they would real advice.

What does one do with advice from the boss? If it is truly advice, there is no obligation to pay attention. If it is truly advice, advisees are within their rights to dispense with one set of advisors and select another or no one. If it is truly advice, the staff may, by not attending meetings or reading reports, effectively disband the committee. If it is truly advice, the board will not think ill of its staff for these rebuffs. If the board has made Ends and Executive Limitations clear, evaluation, even informally, of staff on the basis of acceptance of advice is not only superfluous, but pernicious.

Advice should be totally within the control of advisees. Staff members who want advice should obtain it however they deem best and from anyone they choose. Staff may ask board members for advice, but the advice mechanism should not then be confounded with board authority. Board members may then advise freely as long as that counsel is not misconstrued as subtle orders because they are still wearing board hats. Establishment of formal, official board committees to advise staff is not only unnecessary, but damaging. Joint board-staff committees can be legitimate when they prepare options for the board to consider. This activity should be undertaken only where the respective roles are crystal clear. The joint committee must think at the board's level, not the staff's. By no means should the committee make either board or staff decisions. Board committees need never relate directly with staff except to gather intelligence for use in subsequent board deliberations.

Board Holism

No common practice so threatens board wholeness as the traditional approach to committee work. Let us consider how the work of committees can be useful to a board at minimal cost to its unity.

Traditionally boards with a great many decisions to make have found it only natural to divide their labor. Several committees working simultaneously can digest and form solutions for several times as many problems as can the board working as a whole. Each committee works as a board in microcosm, studying, debating, formulating, and, finally, arriving at a course of action for the board. Committee work yields recommendations for adoption by the board.

What does a board do with recommendations originating from its several committees? It can review the committee's entire process so that all board members understand and participate in the problem-solving experience; however, to do so would unnecessarily duplicate committee work and, in fact, obviate the need for committee work. So, by and large, committee recommendations are accepted. To avoid feeling like rubber stamps, board members may ask a few questions and put the committee "on the spot" before they give approval. Most board members accept that they do not know as much about issues handled by committees of which they are not part. Unless there is reason to believe the committee is incompetent or

biased, they accept the recommendations.

In reality, then, the board does not aggregate its values across a wide range of governance topics. It aggregates the values within committees on one topic at a time: the values of Elizabeth, Brian, Tanya, and Kevin about personnel; the values of Angela, Sara, Ivan, and Krista about finance; the values of Lisa, Terry, Hannah, and Jennifer about ... , and on and on. On the surface the board is fulfilling its obligation to speak with one voice, but, except for a relatively perfunctory approval vote, there is no board. There is only a group of congenial minibboards, inappropriately importing into governance a method that is quite rational in a workgroup.

The governing responsibility is to create a holistic, integrated set of connecting values that, taken together, "cradle" or encompass the nature of organization. Proper governance is not a piecemeal endeavor. Whole-board decision making tends to illuminate those "dark corners" where staff or board members can exercise undue power by pushing an idiosyncratic agenda. The only way a board can create unified policies is to do so as a whole. Fortunately, when a board attends to the larger policy issues and refrains from prescribing executive methods, its job becomes manageable and the board can make decisions as a whole. The quality of the policies thus created reflects the value coloration of the entire governing body across all topics.

Consequently, board committees, when they are needed to assist the board in decision making, should do preboard work, not subboard work. They may work on matters before the board does, but at the board level. They should not work below the board level, or at staff level. But if bringing a recommendation to the board is not supportive of board holism, what then is effective "preboard" work? In boards that govern by policy, most committee work relates to board decisions on policy. A minor part of board work is "doing" rather than "saying," and in these "doing" instances, committees can be used to accomplish an objective as long as their work does not overlap that of the CEO. For this discussion, I consider only what committees can do to help boards create policy. If a board is to deliberate and adopt a policy position, it will do a better job if several options are available. Existence of only one option is a flaw inherent in the recommendation practice. The availability of several alternatives, however, is insufficient for making an intelligent choice unless the board is aware of the implications of each option. In other words, the board needs to know the choices and the consequences of these choices. Only then can it ponder, debate, and vote intelligently.

A useful "preboard" job product of a committee is just such a recounting of policy alternatives and their implications. To produce an alternatives-implications product for the board, the committee must proceed through several careful steps. Assume that some problem, opportunity, or situation has arisen. The matter may have been assigned to the committee by the board or the committee may have come across it in the course of related work.

The committee's first task is to clarify just what the board-level issue is. Determining the appropriate question makes it possible to search for optional answers. First, the committee must be certain it is addressing the correct issue, for it is not uncommon to spend prodigious time probing the wrong issues. Issues are incorrect when they belong to someone else or when they have been inadequately formulated. The former situation occurs when an issue is in the CEO's domain; the latter because the issue is at an inappropriate breadth. Second, the committee searches out the alternative value positions or perspectives available to the board in answer to the issue. What are the optional policies to be considered? Third, the committee investigates the cost, public relations, productivity, and other implications of each policy option.

Relevant implications will form the basis on which the final policy is formulated, so they must be approached thoughtfully. Staff may be called to assist, not in selecting a course of action but in ensuring that available options and important implications have not been omitted. External help may prove useful as well; the board's auditing firm, for example, may have helpful input regarding implications for specific

fiscal constraints under consideration. The committee's product, then, consists of policy options and their implications.

With this product in hand, board members discuss and persuade and vote. There is no committee choice to rubber stamp; neither does the board redo what the committee has already done. No recommendation is necessary. The committee may communicate its preferred option to the board, but it would be of little utility. In this process, the committee job and the board job are sequential and separate. It is greatly significant with respect to board holism that a member not on the authoring committee is just as capable of casting an informed vote as anyone on that committee. The board on the basis of clearly presented survey of options and implications, makes a choice as a board.

Remember that boards that govern by policy need not deal with the flurry of never ending details and low-level issues. They have the time to make fewer, though broader, decisions reflectively. Though they deal with massive value conflicts, these are not boards that react to every staff crisis or that feel nothing should go on that they do not know about. Boards that govern by policy can afford adequate preparation and wide-ranging board consideration of strategic interests.

The Executive Director's relationship with the board is protected by the Bissell Centre board policy entitled "Committee Principles" (Exhibit 19). Note that the policy attempts to prevent committees from becoming over identified with any single area of organization.

This approach to the policy role of board committees places a high value on the wholeness of board action. It values board-integrated oversight of large issues more than participation of segments of the board in narrow slices of organization. With this approach, the bromide "real work takes place in committees" no longer holds true. The board meeting is the place of action. It is not the place for ritual voting or for carrying out the unnecessary business that clutters most board agendas. It is where leaders come together to make leadership decisions.

Legitimate Committees

If board committees should not be tied conceptually or physically to the specific divisions of staff labor and topics, to what should they be related? Which committees might a board use? Recall that the policy-making job is divided into four discrete categories. One option might be to structure committees around these categories. One committee does preparatory work for board choices about Ends, a second prepares for choices about Executive Limitations, a third prepares for policies about Board Process, and a final one prepares for policies on Board-Executive Relationship. As the categories are exhaustive, the committee topics are exhaustive. If ad hoc rather than standing committees are desired, committees can be established whenever a special need arises and then disbanded. In either case, the nature of preboard work would be the same. When proper principles for committee work are maintained, the actual structuring is of less import. The structure may change as the board's need for sub-grouping evolves.

Comments on Traditional Committees

The approach to board committees presented here differs substantially from conventional wisdom. To underscore this model's departure from governance as usual, let us look at several frequently encountered committees in light of the new concepts.

Personnel Committees. There is no justification for the existence of personnel committees. After assisting the board on one or two policies, personnel committees have no place to go but into staff work. A board with a CEO never has a managerially legitimate reason to establish a personnel committee. But what about hiring a new chief executive and handling grievances? If these tasks are so great as to require a standing committee, the board has a problem that will not be addressed by the establishment of a committee.

Executive Committees. An executive committee tends to become the real board within the board, with debilitating effects on holism. An insider/outsider division among board members is not an uncommon result, as the executive committee "becomes the 'in' group of the board, with a corresponding loss of interest and attention of other trustees" (Haskins, 1972, p. 12). If the board is reduced to governable size, an executive committee as usually defined is not needed; however, circumstances peculiar to a given board may unavoidably impose a large board size, and an executive committee may become necessary to get business done. When not established because of board size, an executive committee ordinarily arises because of a lack of clarity in the board's delegation of authority to the CEO. Therefore, executive committees (1) make or approve executive decisions that could otherwise be left to the CEO, (2) assume board prerogatives that should be left to the board, or (3) do both. In other words, executive committees authorized to act must take power either from the board or from the CEO. Establishment of an executive committee to make board decisions between monthly meetings is specious. Board decisions will not arise that often if the board is proactive and delegating properly.

Program Committees. If the program committee is involved in staff implementation decisions, it can be dropped with no loss. If, however, it is preparing truly board-level issues for discussion, then it is in order. Program committees can be legitimate, as described earlier, doing preboard work with respect to Ends. Most program committees I have encountered, however, are involved in program means rather than program results and relate their work directly to current and near-term staff operations.

Finance Committees. There is scant justification for the existence of finance committees. These are much like personnel committees. They could assist the board in developing a very few Executive Limitations policies on financial matters. After that, they have no place to go but into staff work. Sometimes, legitimate board work in fund raising is assigned to a finance committee, though the two functions are vastly different. In such cases, it would be better to rename the committee (for example, "Development") so as not to invite it into inappropriate activity. With adequate financial Executive Limitations policies and the kind of pointed systematic monitoring described in Chapter Six, boards with CEOs have no need for finance committees.

If, however, the board has retained the function of safe-guarding endowment or reserve funds to itself, then a "doing" committee might well be used to carry out that task. In this case, the board job description would include a fourth item like "safety and return of reserve funds."

Nomination Committees. The nominating committee does not exist to help the board create policy, but to replenish itself or its officers. This committee is part of the system that empowers individuals to serve as governors or as officers. It is a proper governance committee. It is the only board committee that may need to be described and empowered in the bylaws, particularly if it acts as a membership committee, selecting nominees for the board.

Traditionally, committees and officers are often used to monitor staff performance. The discussion in Chapter Six argued for monitoring only against the criteria formulated by board policies. If the criteria exist and monitoring takes place as described, the need for committees or officers to monitor is all but eliminated. A group is needed only when the criteria have not been set forth or have been set forth unclearly. If monitoring reports are precisely aimed at the provisions of policies being monitored, boards can end the wasteful practice of using board time in meetings to determine whether criteria were met. Officers and committees can then cease their unnecessary work and attend wholeheartedly to helping the board put its strategic leadership in order.

Sample policy follows...

Exhibit 19.

Bissell Centre Policy: "**Committee Principles.**"

The board may, from time to time, establish committees to help carry out its responsibilities. To preserve board holism, committees will be used sparingly, only when other methods have been deemed inadequate. Committees will be used so as to minimally interfere with the wholeness of the board's job.

1. Board committees may not speak or act for the board except when formally given such authority for specific and time-limited purposes. Such authority will be carefully stated in order not to conflict with authority delegated to the Executive Director.
2. Board committees are to help the board do its job, not to help the staff do its job. Committees will assist the board chiefly by preparing policy alternatives and implications for board deliberation. Board committees are not to be created by the board to advise staff.
3. If a board committee is used to monitor organizational performance in a given area, the same committee will not have helped the board create policy in that area. This is to prevent committee identification with organizational parts rather than the whole.
4. Board committees cannot exercise authority over staff, and in keeping with the board's focus on the future, board committees will ordinarily have no direct dealings with current staff operations. Further, the board will not impede its direct delegation to the Executive Director by requiring approval of a board committee before an executive action.

Doug Eadie. *Habit 2: Develop The Capacity To Govern. Five Habits of High Impact School Boards.* Rowman & Littlefield. 2005

HABIT 2: DEVELOP THE CAPACITY TO GOVERN

FOUR STRATEGIES

When your school board has taken the trouble to clarify its governing role and has mapped out in detail, the processes for engaging board members in a meaningful fashion when making governing judgments and decisions, you have traveled a good distance on the board development road. However, your journey is far from over. High impact school boards all over the country have taken the natural next step: investing in building the capacity of their boards to carry out the governing role they have mapped out. In this regard, they have pursued four major capacity-building strategies:

1. Developing the school board as a human resource, which involves both strengthening the board's composition and building the board members' governing knowledge and skills
2. Employing well-designed board committees (actual or, in the case of really small boards, virtual) as "governing engines," doing the detailed governing work that could not possibly be accomplished in the monthly board meeting
3. Building the boards performance management capacity, fashioning detailed collective and individual governing performance standards and targets and systematically monitoring governing performance
4. Fostering stronger collaboration among board members, turning them into a more cohesive governing team...

DEVELOPING BOARD MEMBERS

The better educated and trained your school board members are in the work of governing, the more likely they are to perform at a high level. So every board that is committed to high-impact governing must also be.

Quality control is always a serious issue in the education business. It would obviously be counter-productive to send board members to a governing program that ends up being a sales pitch for one of those one-size-fits-all governing models that are always floating around. The most effective board continuing education programs, in my experience, build quality control into the planning—often by asking the superintendent to review potential educational offerings to ascertain if they are worth board members' time. Another issue is incentive to participate. Although board members are typically avid life long learners, they are also very busy people. Participation in educational programs will tend to increase, in my experience, if such participation is made a formal board member performance target (see the discussion of board performance management later in the chapter).

THOSE GOVERNING ENGINES

The topic of board standing committees probably does not grab your imagination or send shivers of excitement up and down your spine, but you would be well advised not to underestimate the powerful contribution that these governing engines can make to high-impact governing—or the harm that poorly designed committees can do. Although you will hear debate about whether it makes sense for a school board to have standing committees, the question is settled in my mind. I have never seen a truly high-impact board that functioned without well-designed standing committees, and so I have become a

passionate committee advocate. I have also, by the way, seen poorly designed committees bedevil board members and superintendents, making it extremely difficult to govern at a high level and turning boards and superintendents into unwitting victims of bad structural design.

Let me assure you that I recognize that there are school boards so small (say, five or fewer members,) that dividing them into standing committees would obviously, not make much sense. My rule of thumb is that you need a minimum of seven board members for actual (rather than virtual) committees to make sense: three board members serving on each of two committees, with the board chair concentrating on leading the regular monthly meetings and the deliberations of the executive committee. However, even if your board is too small to divide into actual committees, I strongly recommend virtual committees, which basically means that the full board convenes in a committee format outside of the regular monthly board meeting: meeting as the planning committee one day, and the performance monitoring committee the other. At the very least, this approach will ensure that preparation for the regular board meeting is more thorough, and it should not entail a net increase in board members' time commitment since better preparation will decrease the time required for the regular monthly meeting. Well-designed standing committees can strengthen your boards governing performance and the board-superintendent partnership in four major ways:

1. Committees promote technically sound governing decisions, primarily by enabling board members to get into governing (matters at a level of detail that the regular board meeting does not allow. For example, in following up on the annual strategic planning retreat, your planning committee call pay close attention to refining the values statement that was brainstormed at the retreat, putting it in final form for recommendation to the full board.
2. Committees build feelings of ownership and accountability among board members through their detailed involvement in addressing governing issues, taking pressure off the CEO to be the only source of action recommendations to the full board.
3. Committees can serve as a very effective vehicle for refining and strengthening the board's governing processes. For example, not long ago I sat in on the meeting of a board's governance committee, at which committee members and the superintendent reached agreement on the blow-by-blow process that the board would follow in evaluating the superintendent's performance, from the initial negotiation of superintendent leadership targets through the end-of-year assessment. Not long after that, I observed the deliberations of a board performance oversight committee, which resulted in a reformatted quarterly financial report that was much easier for board members to understand and to use.
4. Committees can also build a more cohesive board-administrator working relationship by facilitating sustained interaction of a less formal nature not possible at regular board meetings. I have also seen committees strengthen the board-superintendent partnership by enabling the superintendent to develop strong working relationships with committee chairs.

COMMITTEE DESIGN

The primary job of a board Standing Committee is to prepare for the regular monthly school board meeting, ensuring that informational briefings and action recommendations are ready for full board review and decision making. Experience has taught me that if a standing committee is to play this important role in a full and timely fashion:

- it must be organized along governing—not programmatic or administrative lines, corresponding to the flow of governing decisions and "products"
- its purview must be organization-wide, cutting across all programs, functions, and organizational

units of the school district, thereby enabling the board to exercise what I call "horizontal discipline" in its governing work.

Two broadly constituted committees that meet these two criteria have proved to be indispensable governing engines in my experience: planning (often called planning and development or planning and program development) and performance monitoring (often called performance oversight or management oversight). Your board's planning committee would be responsible for helping the board deal with a wide variety of planning decisions and "products"—everything from updating your school district's values and vision statement to adopting the annual operational plan and budget. Your board's performance monitoring committee would be responsible for helping the board assess on an ongoing basis how well your district is performing—educationally (especially student performance) and financially. You can easily see that these two committees satisfy the horizontal discipline criterion: planning covers all planning that your district does; performance monitoring tracks and assesses all activities going on in your district.

Many school boards have an executive committee, typically consisting of the board president, the chairs of the other committees, and the superintendent. The problem with the traditional executive committee is that it is often treated as a mini-board that basically screens all information going to the full board, thereby more often than not alienating other board members, who feel less important and out of the loop. Many boards in recent years have turned their executive committee (frequently called the governance committee these days) into a committee on board operations, rather than a mini-board, whose primary responsibility is to make sure that the board is functioning smoothly as a governing body.

The most effective standing committees I have observed over the years take very seriously their governing process design responsibility, in addition to carrying out their governing work (see Chapter 1 for a detailed description of the design process). They collaborate closely with their superintendent and senior administrators in working through the division of labor between the board and administration to make governing decisions. For example, representing the full board, your planning committee can annually take a close look at the design of the strategic and operational planning process of your organization from the board's perspective, identifying practical enhancements that will strengthen the board's participation in making planning decisions. The planning committee might fine-tune the agenda of the annual strategic planning retreat to make it a more effective forum for the identification of strategic issues, or the performance monitoring committee might reach agreement with the superintendent on enhancements to the program performance reports that will promote stronger board understanding of district educational and financial performance.

Avoid the Silos

Violating the key design principle that standing committees should correspond to the board's governing work, rather than to the programmatic and administrative work of your school district, is a surefire way to reduce your board's governing performance. Two types of dysfunctional committees stand out as enemies of high-impact governing: (1) "tip of the administrative iceberg" committees that correspond to narrow administrative functions—for example, finance, audit, personnel, buildings and grounds, and (2) "program silo" committees that correspond to major programs or services that your district provides—for example, instruction, pupil services, athletics.

Instead of enabling your board to exercise horizontal discipline in carrying out its governing work, these poorly designed committees narrow your board members' perspectives, chopping their governing work into little pieces that don't add up—not unlike the proverbial blind person who sees an elephant as only an ear, a trunk, a tail, or a foot, missing the whole elephant completely. This poorly designed structure will inevitably turn your board into a collection of technical advisory committees, in the process actually inviting board meddling in administrative and programmatic detail.

When I encounter a defensive superintendent and administrators who are wasting precious time defending executive and administrative turf from board interference, more often than not, the culprit is a poorly designed committee structure that invites board meddling. I have now and then mused about the reasons why such dysfunctional committees were ever put in place to begin with. The only explanation I have come up with is that boards were traditionally treated as an afterthought in developing organizational structure. Without seriously thinking through how committees should contribute to governing, boards were allowed to become mere vertical extensions of already developed district structure of programs and administrative functions.

Avoid the Wrong Cure

Consultants who traipse around the country advising boards and superintendents to avoid standing committees are reacting to the short comings of a poorly designed committee structure that promotes meddling or forces board members to spend time figuring out how to keep busy enough to justify particular committees (always the case with a committee such as personnel). The only sensible cure, in my professional opinion, for a poorly designed committee structure is a well-designed one that really does facilitate high-impact governing. Taking the extreme course of having your board function as a committee of the whole would mean losing the powerful technical and political benefits that well-designed governing engines can produce.

SOME TRIED AND TRUE GUIDELINES

The following guidelines-thoroughly tested in practice-have helped standing committees function at a high level in supporting and facilitating high-impact governing in school districts and other public and nonprofit organizations:

- Every board member should serve on one and only one standing committee-with the exception that during your term as a committee chair you will also serve on the executive, or governance, committee. If any board members are allowed to avoid committee service, it will create a caste system (those who must participate and those who are too important to have to), and where smaller boards are concerned, one or more committees might drop below a "critical mass" of members.
- The standing committees must be the only path to the full board agenda. This is a massive calcium injection, ensuring that committee work is taken seriously and that committees don't degenerate into mere discussion groups.
- All reports at full board meetings must be made by committee chairs and other committee members, with the sole exception of the superintendent's regular report. This simple requirement not only fosters committee members' ownership of reports and recommendations to the board but also ensures that committee members do their homework (not wanting, of course, to be embarrassed in public). There is the added benefit of the ego satisfaction that comes from committee members' visible leadership at board meetings.
- The superintendent should assign a senior administrator to serve as chief staff member to each committee, ensuring that the committee is provided with the staff support required to carry out its governing work in a full and timely fashion.

TAKING FORMAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Performance accountability is a hallmark of high-achieving organizations and individuals; they set high standards, monitor their own performance, and take concrete steps to become better at what they do. School boards are no exception. Every truly high-impact board I have ever worked with has played an active, formal role in managing its own performance as a governing body, not only taking accountability for the board's collective performance but also making sure that individual board members meet well-

defined performance targets. Although the superintendent must be actively involved in supporting the development of school board governing capacity, no superintendent in his or her right mind would attempt to set board performance standards or hold board members accountable for meeting them. This is a job that your school board must handle for itself.

Rigorous board self-management is not only a surefire way to enhance governing performance, it can also build a more positive internal board culture and a positive public image. For one thing, the members of boards that take accountability for their own performance tend to become stronger owners of their governing work, and hence grow more firmly committed to their governing mission. The internal culture of such accountable boards, in my experience, is also characterized by higher self-esteem and esprit de corps, for the simple reason that the high-achieving people who populate boards are emotionally attracted to setting and meeting standards. After all, that is one of the key reasons for their professional and business success and for their making it to the board in the first place.

You do not want to underestimate the impact that an accountability culture can have on your school board's human resource development. I am often asked the following question in my governance workshops: "Won't some of the really outstanding people we'd like to get on our board be turned off by the whole idea of having their performance measured? After all, these are pretty important people, and we don't want to alienate them." My answer is always the same: "Don't worry; holding your board to clear precise performance standards will have the opposite effect. The more illustrious the candidate for board membership, the more attractive performance management will be for him or her."

Boards that formally and systematically hold themselves to account for their governing performance tend to become magnets that attract the attention of qualified candidates. In my experience, the word inevitably gets around pretty widely in your community that your board is a cut above the ordinary governing body. Potential board members who highly value their time, and hence are looking for a really productive and satisfying governing experience, will tend to be especially interested in standing for election to your board because of its reputation for rigorous self-management.

No matter how committed the individuals on particular board are to performance accountability, formality and structure are critical. Individual board members cannot realistically be expected to hold each other to account, as you well know: life is just too short to take on the task of trying to critique and correct erring colleagues. In the absence of a formally established and managed accountability program, as you have no doubt learned over the years, board members will tend to sit back and tolerate unsatisfactory performance rather than risk alienating colleagues. Your school board's accountability program need not be elaborate, consisting very simply of the following:

- A responsible committee
- Formally developed and adopted performance targets and standards for the board collectively and for individual board members
- Systematic monitoring
- Continuous improvement.

The Responsible Committee

Assigning responsibility for board performance management to a standing committee takes the matter out of the realm of interpersonal politics, making the process of setting standards and monitoring performance politically workable. The boards of many school districts and other public and nonprofit organizations have assigned this responsibility to the board's executive, or governance, committee, in keeping with its role as the committee on board operations. Headed by your board president and consisting of the standing committee chairs, perhaps other board officers, and the superintendent, the executive committee brings both clout and credibility to the performance management task. You just want

to make sure that the accountability management role is clearly spelled out in the official committee position description, which should be formally adopted by the whole board.

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