

Serving on your local school board

A foundation for success





Rewards of school board service

- Working to continually improve schools and student learning
- Building a better future for our kids, our communities and our state
- Strengthening our democracy through an educated citizenry



Objectives for this workshop

- Provide an introduction to school director duties and responsibilities
- Explore legal and ethical aspects of board work
- Practice team leadership
- Introduce you to resources for school directors



Introductions

- Each candidate, state name and district
- WSSDA staff
- This session is being taped by TVW for viewing by others around the state





About us

Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA)

- All school board members from the state's 295 districts
- Authorized by the Legislature to be self-governing

Statewide system, local governance

- School boards established by state law to govern their local districts
- Most funding provided by the Legislature and allocated by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- OSPI and State Board of Education adopt rules to implement laws
- School boards govern locally through district policies and budgets





Statewide system, local governance

- Washington has 295 school districts, 1,477 school directors
- 1,028,377 students statewide
- 101,000 employees
- \$5.5 billion per year allocated by the state, plus \$1.4 billion from levies
- School districts are often the largest “corporation” in the community





The governance role of school boards

- School boards are “governors” of the district, acting on behalf of the people in their community
- For all school boards, the bottom line is student achievement





The governance team

- School directors and the superintendent make up the governance team
- Board-superintendent relations are the key to a successful district
- Understand and respect each other's roles



The governance team

A successful board-superintendent partnership is built on trust and mutual respect

- Frequent two-way communication
- No surprises!
- Well-defined roles
- Professional growth
- Regular evaluations



The governance team

- Once a decision is made, it is important for all parties to support it
- Whenever possible, speak with “one voice” on key decisions



Governance team roles

School Board

GOVERNS

Decides what

Requests information

Considers issues

Creates, reviews and adopts policy

Approves and reviews plans

Monitors progress

Contracts with personnel

Approves evaluation criteria
and procedures

Reviews and approves budget

Represents public interests

Superintendent

MANAGES

Decides how

Seeks and provides information

Provides recommendations

Recommends and carries out policy

Implements plans

Reports progress

Supervises hiring process & practices

Supervises and evaluates
personnel

Formulates budget

Acts in public interest





The role of the board

From your experiences and knowledge identify some roles of school boards

Turn to someone next to you and share the roles you determined

Report to the group





The governance role of school boards

Standard 1. Provide responsible school district governance:

(Examples of board actions that meet Standard 1)

The board bases its decisions on what is best for students.

The board conducts its meetings in a businesslike manner.

The board models civility in all its interactions.





The governance role of school boards

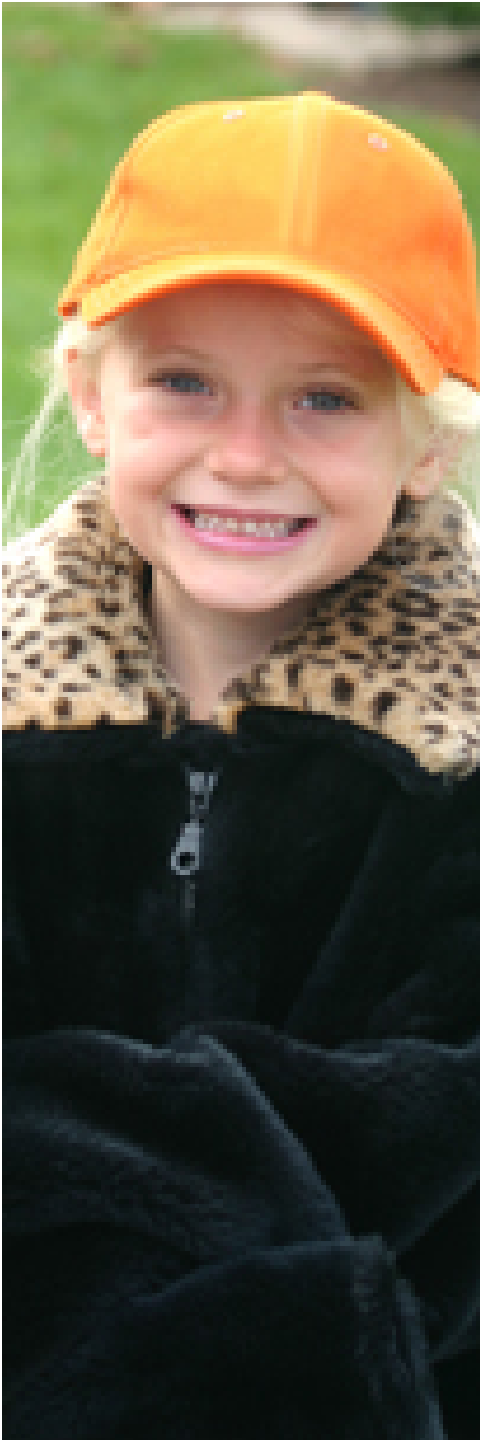
Standard 2. Set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations:

(Examples of board actions that meet Standard 2)

The board includes stakeholders and the community in the development and revisions of the district's vision.

The board uses the vision to drive planning, decision-making and evaluation of district operations and progress.





The governance role of school boards

Standard 3. Create conditions district-wide for student and staff success:

(Examples of board actions that meet Standard 3)

The board has policy in place for the support, evaluation and updating of technology.

The board periodically reviews and evaluates district facilities and has in place a long term facilities plan for construction and maintenance.



The governance role of school boards

Standard 4. Hold school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations:

(Examples of board actions that meet Standard 4)

The board expects and models the effective use of data in monitoring student achievement and performance.

The board establishes a policy and process for routine evaluation of the superintendent.



The governance role of school boards

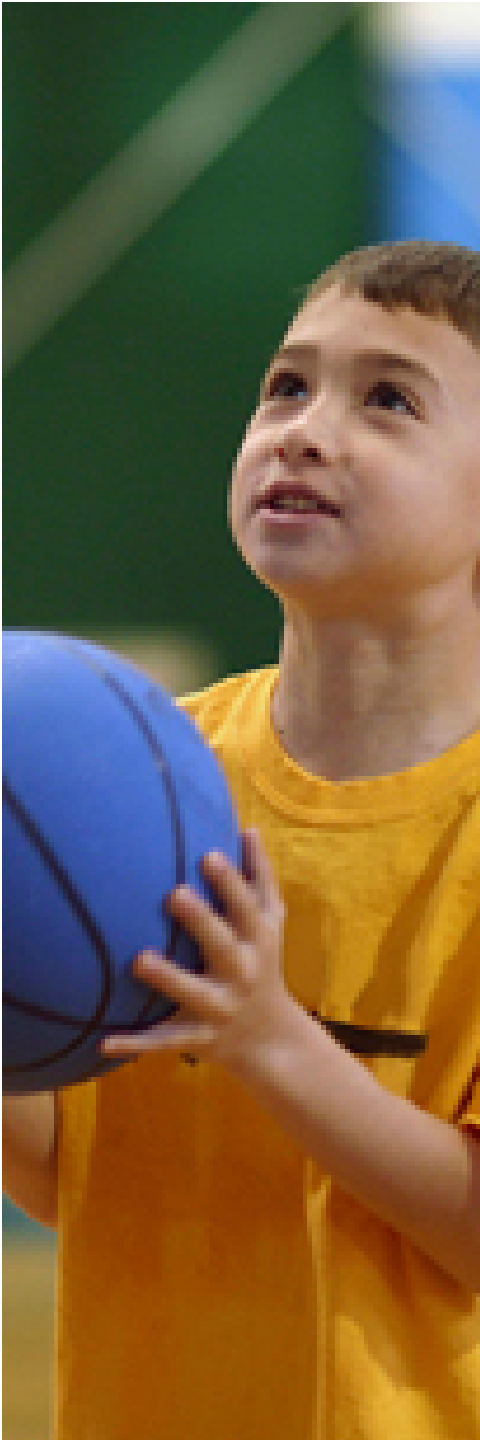
Standard 5. Engage local community and represent the values and expectations they hold for their schools:

(Examples of board actions that meet Standard 5)

The board exhibits cultural, racial and ethnic understanding and sensitivity.

The board ensures that the public is well informed of the board's role and responsibilities.





The responsibilities of school boards

- Individual school directors have no legal authority
- Authority is exercised by a majority of the board
- Specific responsibilities include:
 - Planning and goal setting
 - Employing and evaluating the superintendent
 - Setting district policy





The responsibilities of school boards

- Adopting an annual operating budget
- Making decisions about placing levies and bonds before voters
- Approving the instructional program
- Ratifying contracts negotiated with local bargaining units.



What would you do?

In your manual there are scenarios that are examples of challenges facing school directors.

Turn to page 41 and take a look at Scenario # 1. Read the description and think of how you would answer the two questions below.

Turn to a neighbor and share your responses.



WSSDA: Your organization

- WSSDA was established in 1914 as a public agency
- Authorized by the Legislature to be self-governed
- All school directors are automatically members
- Positions and policies are developed by members through a grassroots process
- For more information go to **wssda.org**



The school board and the law

- Laws and regulations governing school districts are numerous, complex and ever-changing
- Statutes (RCWs) and regulations (WACs) are compiled in the Common School Manual, published by OSPI
- Federal and state court decisions also affect school law



The school board and the law

- When legal issues arise, consult an attorney.
- WSSDA can provide some assistance, but does not offer legal advice or act as legal counsel for school districts.





Legal requirements for school board meetings

- School boards must hold a regular meeting at least once a month
 - Time, day and place of regular meetings must be spelled out in district policy
 - Meetings should be held in the district
- If special meetings are held, adequate notice must be given to board members and the local media



Legal requirements for school board meetings

- A quorum (a majority of members) is needed to hold a meeting
 - *It is best — and sometimes required — that a majority of the board vote on action items*
- Accurate minutes must be kept of regular and special meetings
- Executive (“closed”) sessions may be held to discuss certain subjects



Legal requirements for school board meetings

- Executive sessions are allowed to:
 - Review performance on publicly-bid contracts
 - Evaluate complaints or charges brought against an employee
 - Evaluate a job applicant's qualifications or conduct an employee performance review
 - Confer with legal counsel regarding actual or potential litigation involving the district



Legal requirements for school board meetings

- Sensitive, controversial or uncomfortable subjects are not a justification for executive session
- “Private” meetings are allowed for:
 - Quasi-judicial matters, e.g., student disciplinary hearings
 - Planning for collective bargaining or reviewing contract proposals during negotiations



Employee relations and collective bargaining

- School districts are required to bargain collectively with their employees
- Districts take different approaches
 - Some hire bargainers
 - Some designate the superintendent or a staff member
 - Some designate a bargaining team



Employee relations and collective bargaining

- Regardless of the structure, the governance team must agree on the parameters of bargaining
- The board must be kept informed on the status of negotiations
- The board must act collectively; actions by individual board members may constitute an unfair labor practice



Employee relations and collective bargaining

- Sometimes strikes are inevitable, but they should be avoided if possible
- Remember that effective employee relations must be conducted year-round (not just during bargaining)
- Ultimately, the board must make decisions about spending priorities and the district's long-range objectives
- If a strike does occur, resources include ERNN, WSSDA and WASA



Frequently asked questions

- Will I be paid?
- Do I have to report my personal finances to the PDC?
- Am I personally liable for decisions I make on the school board?





Ethics for board members

Make sure your actions as a school director are guided by a sound, ethical code of conduct

- Make decisions based on facts and independent judgment
- Take no private action that will compromise the district; avoid conflicts of interest
- Be objective; keep an open mind



Ethics for board members

- Keep your promises; don't make promises you can't keep
- Strive for cooperation and teamwork
- Keep your sense of humor
- Understand that change comes slowly
- Act in the interest of all students



Don't forget the work ethic!

- Do your homework before each board meeting
- Do your best to attend every board meeting
- Stay current on local, state and federal education issues
- Take part in board training programs
- Attend other government/community meetings when possible



What would you do?

In your manual there are scenarios that are examples of challenges facing school directors.

Turn to page 43 and take a look at Scenario # 5. Read the description and think of how you would answer the question below.

Turn to a neighbor and share your responses.



Education acronyms

- There are scores of education-related abbreviations and acronyms
- “Educationese” is a barrier to communication — limit your use of buzz words and acronyms in board meetings and other public forums
- If you do use acronyms, explain what they mean



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WSSDA: Your organization

- Be sure to attend the **WSSDA Annual Conference!**
 - **Where:** Bellevue, WA
 - **When:** November 17-20
- **New Board Boot Camp**
 - Thursday, November 17



Other sources

Help is just around the corner ...


- Your superintendent
- ESDs
- Other board members
- OSPI, State Board of Education
- WASA, AWSP, PTA
- Local teacher associations





*The Washington State
School Directors' Association
provides leadership, advocacy and
services to support public school
directors' efforts to improve student
learning through quality governance
of schools.*



A young girl with her arms raised in a blue tank top against a bright sky.

Thank you
for your
participation today!

