Stop Micromanaging, Start Governing: Rethinking your Board Governance Structure

MASB Leadership Conference - October, 2015

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My Board is

Governing is
Does your Board consider itself a Policy Board?
Has your board ever been called a rubber stamp?
It’s important to develop governing capacity. If you don’t, you may end up with dissatisfied high achievers capable of causing lots of trouble.

**WE'RE NOT MICROMANAGING YOU**

**JUST TELL US EVERYTHING YOU DO IN A DAY, HOW MANY TIMES YOU DO THEM, AND HOW LONG IT TAKES**
Case study: The Budget Myth

One of the Board’s primary responsibilities is to adopt (*not develop*) the annual budget.

**Most Boards do one of two things:**
1) Review the document; asking minor questions and approving.
2) Question line items in detail, essentially administrative work; upsetting staff, and micromanaging the process.
Creating Conditions

“These (traditional) levers rarely work to drive authentic, sustainable change in complex learning organizations staffed by experienced professionals”

Mehta 2013
The work of Doug Eadie
Extraordinary Board Leadership: The Keys to High Impact Governing,
Doug Eadie 2009 (second edition)
The work of Doug Eadie

Excellence by Design, Doug Eadie, American School Board Journal, June 2010
How do you maximize staff, volunteer time, and energy in governing?
Signs of High Impact Governing Boards

Strategic, operational and programmatic issues facing your district are addressed in a full and timely fashion. Everyone’s voice is heard.

Leadership priorities are clear and the Board is able to determine how well the district is doing; strategically, programmatically, operationally, financially, and in terms of public perception and relationships with the community.

Routine decisions (ex: updating policy or amending the budget) do not require board members to delve into great detail.

Board members find their work satisfying and feel ownership of their governing decisions.

Board members work in partnership with the Superintendent.
The Birmingham Public Schools
Old Governance Model

Standing Subcommittees
3 Board members
1 AdTeam member

Audit
Finance
Facilities
Negotiations/Compensation
Curriculum and Instruction
Policy
Technology
Stadium Enterprise
Conference Center Oversight
Strategic Planning

Special Subcommittees
3 Board members, short term
1 AdTeam member
Ex: Innovative Practices Bond
Liaison Assignments

Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB)
National School Board Association (NSBA)
Oakland County School Board Association (OCSBA)
Birmingham Youth Assistance Scholar
Birmingham Education Foundation
Special Education Parent Action Committee
Community Education Central Advisory Council
Birmingham Conference Center Oversight Committee
Stadium Enterprise Committee
International Academy
Strategic Plan
Diversity
BEA dialogue
Character Education
African American Family Network
Parent, Teacher, Student Association Council (PTSA)
 Athletic Advisory Board
Old Model

**Strengths:**
- Board members self select assignments based on interest and experience.
- Structure built on assumption that a board’s work is best organized along the same lines as the programmatic and administrative structure of the organization.
- Board buddies: encouraged communication between board members.

**Challenges:**
- Too many assignments.
- Does not, over time, build broad knowledge base for all board members.
- No sense of how to prioritize initiatives or how they fit together.
- Temptation to micromanage (getting into the weeds).
- Temptation for administration to use expertise of individual board members for operations.
- Insufficient flow of information.
- Temptation for administration to hear 3 voices and begin to move forward in a direction resulting in additional questions, starts/stops/jerking of the chain and defensiveness.
- Temptation for board members to be advocates for their particular committees, groups based on assignments, causing unnecessary competition for resources.
- Board buddies: can be like a game of operator…. 
Birmingham Public Schools
New Governance Model
(based on the work of Doug Eadie)

Audit Committee
Governance Committee
Planning and Program Committee
Performance and Oversight Committee

*in the Eadie model there is an External Relations and Resource Development Committee

still have liaison assignments, but reduced number
New Model

Strengths:
- Better use of board members time.
- Less silo-ing. Better understanding of the big picture.
- Better flow of information.
- Opportunity for board members to build a broad base of knowledge.
- Opportunity for quality discussions on district issues.
- Opportunity for better board-administration interaction.

Challenges:
- Not enough time to cover all agenda items.
- Difficult to separate agendas (planning/performance).
- Flow of information between committees and with the Board President.
Governance Committee
Responsible for Board Operations

Board President, Chair
Planning Chair
Performance Chair
Superintendent

Accountable for:
- Managing Superintendent’s contract.
- Working with the Superintendent to review and update Sup/Board evaluation tools and metrics.
- Working with Superintendent to establish annual performance targets and ensuring that the full board evaluates Sup. annually.
- Coordinating the functioning of the board and its standing committees, keeping the governing mission updated, setting board member performance standards, monitoring the performance of the board as a whole and serving as the board’s nominating committee.
- Reviewing and updating Board by laws.
- Reviewing policy that merits Board attention.
- Organizing legislative advocacy in partnership with Superintendent.
Planning Committee
Oversees the strategic, operational and fiscal planning of the district

3 Board Members
Full Team Administrative Team
Superintendent

Accountable for:

• Working with the Sup. and administrative team to articulate budget development cycle, budgetary requirements and priorities to the full board and community.
• Ensuring as part of the annual budget process, that all plans include both financial and programmatic performance targets that the performance committee can use in assessing performance.
• Reviewing financial resources for alignment with strategic plan and board goals.
• Reviewing facilities, capital improvement and technology plan for alignment with strategic plan and board goals.
• Reviewing strategies for marketing and public relations for alignment with strategic plan and board goals.
• Reviewing other programming for alignment with board goals.
• Continuous external scans of best practices related to fiscal and programmatic operations.
• Reviewing strategic plan for viability of goals.
• Ensuring strategic goals are aligned with programs and resources.
Performance Committee
Oversees the strategic, operational and fiscal performance of the district

3 Board Members
Full Administrative Team
Superintendent

Accountable for:
- Monitoring budget requirements and priorities.
- Monitoring key elements of financial reporting process, including the content and format of the reports to the board.
- Monitoring progress on implementation of specific plans related to facilities, capital improvement and technology needs.
- Monitoring data dashboard, strategic plan and other performance metrics to measure the progress of key work, programmatic and strategic planning goals.
- Monitoring effectiveness of instructional programming relative to strategic plan and board goals.
- Monitoring performance targets for marketing and public relations.
- Monitoring other programs for alignment with strategic plan and board goals.
- Ensuring programs and resources are aligned with strategic goals.
Audit Committee
Oversees internal controls and external audit functions
3 Board Members
Assistant Superintendent for Finance
Superintendent

Accountable for:
• Reviewing and approving external audit firm.
• Reviewing external audit report, evaluating findings and assessing Superintendent recommendations.
• Briefing the board and community on findings and recommended action
• Monitoring implementation of actions.
• Reviewing and evaluating financial management policies and procedures and recommending updates as appropriate.
• Execution of specific duties as outlined in Audit Committee Charter Matrix.
Discuss current strengths and challenges of your Board governance structure (Board President and Superintendent).

*Reading Doug Eadie's article, *Excellence by Design* will help determine whether you should consider changing your governance structure.*

If leadership is in agreement, share the article with the rest of the Board and AdTeam. If there is consensus, discuss in a retreat.

Examine current committee and board operating procedures. Identify needs and issues.

Discuss overall vision, where we want to be, and why are we doing this. Discuss key work of Planning, Performance, Governance committees. *You may want a facilitator to help you.*
Next Steps

Develop job description for each committee; roles and responsibilities. *This can be done with a small subcommittee and Superintendent.*

Share with full Board and AdTeam. Get feedback and revise as necessary.

Develop implementation plan, including communication plan to community and staff.

Align committee work with board meeting schedule.

Determine if items that reach the full board agenda will be required to come through committees (with exception of routine items).

Align governance model with board by laws if necessary.
Resources

*Excellence by Design.* Doug Eadie, American School Board Journal, June 2010

*Stand and Deliver.* Doug Eadie, American School Board Journal, June 2013

*Chapter 3- Board Standing Committees and Other Structural Questions.* Doug Eadie. The Board Savvy CEO: Building a High Impact Partnership with your Board. Doug Eadie 2014


*The Iowa School Board Lighthouse Study: School Boards and Student Achievement*, Iowa School Board Compass, Fall 2000

*Key Work of School Boards*, National School Boards Association

*The Purpose of Public Education and the Role of the School Board*, National School Boards Association


*District Leadership that Works*, Marzano