

BULLETIN BOARD

Implementing BOE Governance Standards

Has your board recently discussed its governance standards? A starting point is MASB's Board of Education Governance Standards, which were developed *by* board members *for* board members to provide a shared, research-based framework for effective school board governance (to access, visit miboardstandards.com). Not only do they define the principles that should affect board decisionmaking, they also identify the specific behaviors of school boards and school board members that contribute to positive outcomes for students.

The Standards meet a board wherever they are—if you have a high-functioning board, they are simply a way for you to be even better at what you do; if your board sometimes struggles with governance issues, then they lay out a framework to help resolve those issues. They help us to raise the bar, live up to expectations as elected officials and better understand our roles.

MASB recommends every school governance team (the board and superintendent) hold a retreat at least once a year. It can provide an opportunity to innovate, see new possibilities and envision the work of the district, a look at your overall governance framework would be a valuable topic to work through together.

Additionally, you may want to consider using an outside facilitator as having someone else leading the review frees all participants to explore and engage fully in the process, rather than worrying about leading it. Ideally, the facilitator should be part of the planning process, so they can familiarize themselves with the context and relevant issues.

Facilitators make sure that all conversations are productive and help the group stay connected to its larger purpose. They do this by: helping people stay on task; creating space for people to express themselves and helping them hear each other; managing time; tracking the energy of the group; managing a record of the proceedings; connecting conversations, ideas and perspectives; and using different ways of communicating and considering information.

In an era of increased scrutiny and accountability it is important for the school board to be on top of their game. While it is natural for us to measure our success on the board by individual contributions, the real measure is how the team operates as a whole. If the governance team is not continually growing and learning together then they are truly falling behind. Expanding your leadership capacity through training, including retreats, should remain a top priority for you and your governance team.



MASB
MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS