

Starting Right: Board-building for the New Governance Team

An in-district workshop designed for a board with one or more new members or a new superintendent.

Every board must find a balance: new board members are eager to make a contribution to the board and as newly elected officials they have a responsibility to participate fully in local school governance. However, every board operates out of a culture and past practice that helps define the district. School districts don't "start over" after every election or superintendent hire; the new board team must take account of the established culture and the contribution of new members. While some things may change, continuity and stability are important for district programs and students.

The wise governance team will know and understand the importance of board process policy (board agreements about how they do business). By discussing – with everyone at the table – the board's practices, procedures, and professional ethics, you'll get your new team relationships off to a good start.

Does your governance team have agreement on common board process questions? How might you establish appropriate policy?

- Placing items on the agenda
- Asking questions about upcoming agenda items
- Communicating with board members
- Communicating with staff
- Visiting campuses
- Responding to complaints
- Communicating with the media
- Communicating with the public
- Orienting new members
- Conducting closed sessions
- Participating during public forums
- Setting expectations for the superintendent
- Other key board practices

Benefits of a "Starting Right" workshop include:

- Building quality communication and relationships,
- Creating agreement about roles and responsibilities,
- Improving board meetings,
- Establishing a better board-superintendent partnership, and
- Securing effective leadership for the district.

How do we get off to a good start?

Contact your IASB field services director to discuss goals, process and timelines for this in-district board workshop. Our staff will make every effort to meet the specific needs of your board. The process usually begins with establishing a date for the in-district session. A dedicated meeting is typically 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

"Starting Right" is a form of board self-evaluation. The Illinois Open Meetings Act allows boards to meet in closed session for the purpose of self-evaluation "when meeting with a representative of a statewide association of which the public body is a member." 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(16). The board may choose whether to do this self-evaluation in closed or open session.

A fee of \$400 for this service covers all expenses including IASB staff travel. Fees for any additional follow-up workshops requested by the board as a result of this session will be quoted as outlined in the IASB Field Services Catalog.

Contact your Field Services Director today!

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