

LEADERBOARD

MAGAZINE

REVISITING THE FOUNDATION

As the fundamentals of school board service evolve, how will it affect the structure?

VOL. 7, ISSUE 1 | WINTER 2021



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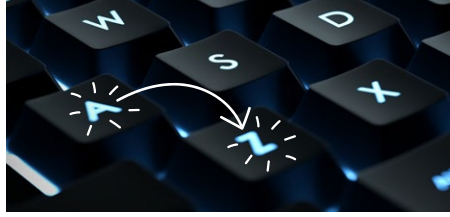
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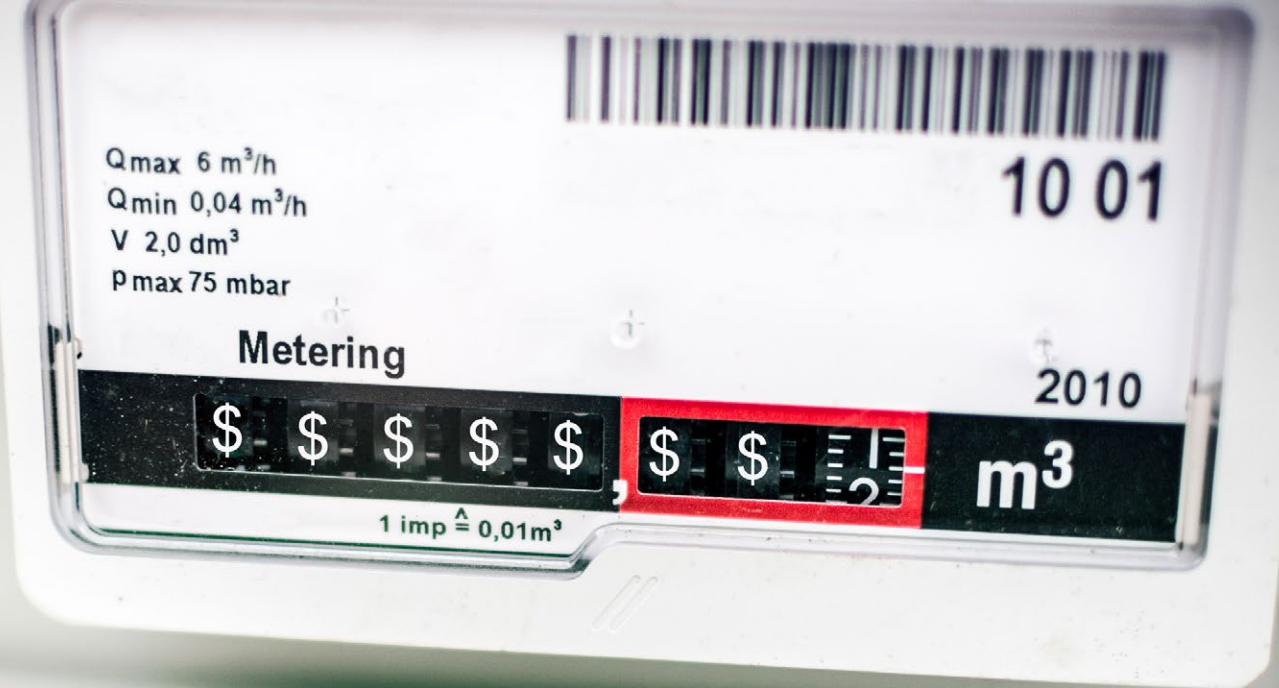
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ASSUME GOOD INTENTIONS

By Don Wotruba, CAE

Seems like a pretty easy statement to live by, but we are so often unable to occupy that space. Whether it be in politics, board/superintendent relations, work or even family, many people have moved away from this ideal and into a space of defensiveness and self-importance. This new mindset takes away our ability to learn from each other, experience personal growth and appreciate what everyone brings to the table. We will be a society lacking richness and growth if we abandon listening to the thoughts that others have—particularly when they are different from ours.

I bring this up as we enter a new year still in the midst of a pandemic, with hopes that we need something else to focus on—listening to each other and learning from one another. In schools, we are poised to see more than 500 new school board members take office in January. This is coupled with nearly 800 board members who were elected and appointed since the last election. The change in boards is nothing new and has happened in similar numbers over recent years, but it's coupled with 80 new superintendents in each of the past five years too. If these numbers don't speak to a need for listening and learning from each other, I don't think anything will.

As you take on these new roles, I hope you can assume good intentions with each other. That's the first step in building trust in the school district leadership team. Make sure you have a quality onboarding program for you new school board members and create opportunities—even if they are virtual—for open discussions about how your school board governs and interacts with each other and with your superintendent. Superintendents struggling to just keep up during these times still must find the time to build relationships with board members. Help them understand how you are implementing the vision and plan of the school board while also introducing them

to who you are as a person. This doesn't absolve anyone from accountability, but isn't it much easier to have those conversations when you have a relationship, knowing each party is in this for the kids in your district?

More and more, we're seeing school boards reflecting the division that exists in our society. We must do better. The relationships between board members, between superintendents and board members, and among all those at the governing table directly impact every kid in the districts you serve. The repercussions at the board table are far greater than those at your lunch table at work. School governance is not about representing a faction, but about governing together for the betterment of your students. I see school boards and superintendents every day modeling the very best in school governance, and you can see the positive results in their students. While setting aside our individual needs isn't easy, I know each and every one of our members is up to the task.

This ability to focus on the greater good is why I love serving school board members through MASB. I cannot think of another elected body that positively impacts so many others. To those who continue to serve on a school board, I extend deep thanks for your service. And to those just beginning their school board journey, thank you for thinking beyond yourself.

“More and more, we're seeing school boards reflecting the division that exists in our society. We must do better.”



Don Wotruba, CAE

Don is MASB's Executive Director, and can be reached at dwotruba@masb.org or 517.327.5900.



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★ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ★

WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE

*By Jill Fennessy
Tri County Area Schools*

Welcome to a new year and, for many districts, new faces at your board table. January brings into focus the work of boards with School Board Recognition Month, organizational meetings for some, and onboarding of new members from the fall elections. It's a busy time of year as we come out of the holiday season and return, prepared to work, and to redirect our attention to the success of our students.

First, I wish to express my sincere gratitude for everything you do for your students and communities. Getting on board requires dedication, commitment, time and a passion for kids. Staying on board calls for even more. For those who are newly elected, congratulations and welcome to board service! I encourage you to consider planning for your own personal growth as a board member by taking advantage of all the learning opportunities MASB is ready to provide to you and your districts.

I recently attended a webinar titled "The Board's Role in Superintendent Success," and I was disheartened to learn that the No. 1 reason superintendents leave districts is due to a less-than-ideal working relationship with board of education members. In my home district of Tri County Area Schools, we believe in a team approach to onboarding new members that includes the participation of our

superintendent. We believe this approach helps promote the culture of board-superintendent teamwork that we have worked carefully to maintain. Tri County's board uses the January work session meeting just for this purpose—reviewing the orientation materials, answering questions and offering pearls of wisdom to our newest members. Our superintendent is part of this discussion, and new members are encouraged to reach out to any of us as they begin their journey. We especially want them to see our best work is done when we perform as a team, and we are all there to help them be successful.

Finally, I believe all of this begins with a good governance model. There are several models out there for districts to choose from, and if your district doesn't already follow a particular model, MASB has prepared a publication for you titled "The Board of Education Governance Standards," endorsed by Michigan's State Board of Education. This document is a great place to start for districts reevaluating current practices.

Thank you for your dedication to Michigan's future as we serve to educate all students!



Jill Fennessy

Jill is MASB's 2020-2021 President, and can be reached at jfennessy@tricityschools.com.



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ASK BRAD: YOUR SCHOOL LAW QUESTIONS ANSWERED

By Brad Banasik, J.D.

EACH ISSUE OF MASB'S *LEADERBOARD* FEATURES HYPOTHETICAL SCHOOL LAW QUESTIONS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO THE QUESTIONS THAT THE MASB LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT RECEIVES FROM MEMBERS. THE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE LEGAL INFORMATION AND ENHANCE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS' UNDERSTANDING OF SCHOOL LAW ISSUES BY EXPLAINING HOW LAWS OR COURT CASES APPLY TO GIVEN SITUATIONS.

IF YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ANSWERED IN A FUTURE ISSUE, PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION TO COMMS@MASB.ORG.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER COMPENSATION



A new school board member was curious why members didn't receive a stipend for serving on the school board or attending meetings. While participating in an MASB CBA class, the board member sought information on the issue from others in the session. The feedback the school board member received included examples of stipends of varying amounts paid on a yearly, monthly or meeting basis which, in some cases, were capped at a specific number of meetings per year. This left the board member confused and wondering if any laws address school board member compensation by setting parameters on minimum or maximum amounts for stipends.

At one time, the Michigan School Code included multiple sections that covered school board member compensation for local and intermediate school boards. The sections identified limits on compensations for board members based on the classification of the school district. However, the sections applying to local school districts were repealed when the Michigan School Code was revised in 1996.

The repealed sections of the old code were essentially replaced with one section that empowers local school districts with broad general authority to exercise power incidental or appropriate to the performance of a function relating to operating a school district.¹ This section also specifically authorizes school boards to adopt bylaws to cover matters relating to the effective and efficient functioning of a board, and it clarified that any board procedures, bylaws and policies that were in effect when the code was revised remained in place until changed by action of the board.

Consequently, under the new Revised School Code, local school boards had the option of keeping their current bylaw on board member compensation or adopting a new bylaw that established a different amount for a stipend. If a school board kept the status quo, then the amount likely remained \$30 per meeting.

Between the 1996 revision and today, a school board could've amended its bylaws by increasing or decreasing school board member compensation, even to the point of eliminating school board member stipends all together, which was the decision made by the new member's school board.

Thus, for local general powers school boards, member compensation may be set by approving a bylaw by a majority vote that establishes a stipend amount, which may be based on attending meetings or paid out on a monthly or yearly basis. Presently, the Revised School Code does not include a limitation on the compensation a local school board member for a general powers school district may receive for serving on the board or attending meetings.

If the bylaw provides for compensation for meeting attendance, a school board should consider clarifying what constitutes a "meeting." Will board members receive a stipend for attending a committee meeting? What about attending a negotiations session if a board member serves on the negotiations team? Or will the stipend apply if a board member is attending and participating in a meeting by virtual means? A school board could define a "meeting" for compensation purposes in its bylaws or operating procedures manual, or on an annual basis at its organizational meeting.

School board members serving on intermediate school boards are compensated based on Section 621 of the Revised School Code.² This statute provides that intermediate school boards may authorize compensation which "shall not exceed \$30 per meeting, subcommittee meeting, or authorized duty. . . related to the member's responsibility as a board member [and] authorized in advance by resolution of the board." The compensation is also limited to 52 meetings, subcommittee meetings and authorized duties per year unless the intermediate school board votes to remove the limitation.

If an intermediate school board wishes to increase the \$30 compensation amount, it must introduce a resolution on the matter at a regularly scheduled meeting and then hold a public hearing and vote on the resolution at its next regularly scheduled meeting. If the resolution is approved by the intermediate school board, then the compensation increase is subject to the approval of a majority of constituent local school boards of the intermediate school district.

¹MCL 380.11a.

²MCL 380.621.



Brad Banasik, J.D.

Brad is MASB's Legal Counsel/Director of Labor Relations & Policy, and can be reached at bbanasik@masb.org or 517.327.5929.

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DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

BATTLE CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

Location: Calhoun County

Size: 3,825

Board Members and Terms of Service:

Catherine LaValley, VICE PRESIDENT	(2015-2024)
Kyra Wallace, SECRETARY	(2017-2022)
Patty Poole-Gray, TREASURER	(2019-2024)
Charlie Fulbright, TRUSTEE	(2019-2026)
Art McClenney, TRUSTEE	(2010-2022)
Nathan Grajek, TRUSTEE	(2021-2026)
Jacqueline Slaby, TRUSTEE	(2017-2022)

Website: battlecreekpublicschools.org



DESCRIBE YOUR BOARD'S LEADERSHIP STYLE IN ONE WORD.

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YOUR BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT(S) AS A SCHOOL BOARD?

As we frequently say during our board meetings, “great things are happening in Battle Creek Public Schools!” and it is an honor to be part of the change taking shape in BCPS. With so much happening during our district transformation over the past three years, it is difficult to narrow it down. We’ve opened our area’s only STEM-focused middle school, an International Baccalaureate Primary Years candidate school with a Spanish-language focus at the elementary level, and we became the second district in Michigan with an officially designated Ford Next Generation Learning high school, the Battle Creek Central High School Career Academies.

We have been working to increase opportunities and improve outcomes at every level, but if there is one thing we have been most proud of, it would have to be the involvement and support of countless community organizations, individuals and institutions that give of their time and financial resources to support our students. With the BCCHS Career Academies alone, we saw dozens of local business owners, industry leaders, parents, students, staff and more come together to envision and shape the future of our high school experience to ensure every student graduates career, college and community ready. The support from local nonprofits and foundations has also meant that more local scholarship dollars are available for graduating BCPS students than any other area school district.

ONE PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE TO ALL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:

Keep the students first and foremost in all decisions and be supportive and passionate about your district.

WHAT ARE YOUR DISTRICT'S MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES?

Aside from the global pandemic, which has caused a seismic shift for every school district to adjust to right now, one of our key areas of focus is on improving equitable opportunities for the children and families we serve. In 2017, a New York University study¹ of our community’s education system revealed that racial bias and segregation, compounded by income inequality, had concentrated poverty in BCPS among people of color, perpetuating economic and racial divisions. It further revealed achievement gaps between BCPS and other Battle Creek school districts in educational metrics such as test scores, grade-level reading and graduation rates. Following this study, BCPS set out on an equity-focused mission to improve outcomes for its students. To support this work, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation announced an unprecedented commitment to the district in 2017 with a five-year \$51 million investment to fund a comprehensive, equity-informed transformation plan to achieve success for every student in the district. We are now in year four of our transformation plan and remain focused on our commitment to 100% success for every Bearcat.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MASB PRODUCT OR SERVICE?

Training. It is so important that all board members get certified and participate in the ongoing training opportunities to stay up to date with policies and practices to continue doing what is best for students.

¹Kirkland, D.E., Ahran, R., Boesen, M., Sanzone, J., Johnson, E. and Freidus, A. with support from Rossman, C., Warren, C. and Marciano, J. *Equity and Excellence in College and Career Readiness: Study of Education in Battle Creek, Michigan. Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, New York University, 2017.*

If you would like to recommend your district to be featured in a future District Spotlight, please send an email to comms@masb.org.



MASB *From*

By Shelley Davis Boyd, MBA

Whether you're a new or veteran board member, the Michigan Association of School Boards is here to support you in your effort to be as effective as possible. This overview highlights some of the programs and services available to board members.

ADVOCACY

The MASB Government Relations Department represents the views of members to federal and state legislative leaders. Information on pending legislation and current issues affecting public education is available online through e-Vocate, along with the News From the Capitol e-newsletter. masb.org/advocacy-legislation.aspx

BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

MASB encourages boards to develop a strong commitment to regularly evaluate and improve their practices and procedures. This free resource is a survey of 75 questions covering the board's primary roles and responsibilities. Each board member completes the survey, and the results are compiled by MASB to help your board see where it is strong and where improvements may be needed. masb.org/board-self-assessment.aspx

CASBA

County Area School Board Associations have been an integral part of MASB for more than 40 years. CASBAs bring local districts together to provide an opportunity for school board members to get issue support and information, a forum for discussion of and advocacy for the promotion of these issues and a regional link between MASB and local board members. masb.org/casbas

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

This is comprised of at least one voting delegate from each school district in the state. Direction is provided to the Association leadership through the adoption of resolutions, which become MASB's official position as interpreted and pursued by the Board of Directors. The Assembly also may vote on amendments to the MASB Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. It takes place during the Annual Leadership Conference. masb.org/delegate-assembly.aspx

ERIN

The Employment Relations Information Network is a comprehensive online resource for employee relations and contract negotiation data. A subscription is required and provides access to salary information, fringe benefits for teachers, principals and superintendents, specific contract language, and model job descriptions, interview questions and evaluation forms. masb.org/erin

FUNDS

MASB's Legal Trust Fund was established in 1975 to assist Michigan school boards involved in litigation with statewide significance. The Member Assistance Fund started as a pilot program in 2019 to help defray the costs of districts experiencing financial hardship or that see costs as a deterrent to accessing MASB services or events. masb.org/legal-trust-fund.aspx and masb.org/fund



m A to Z

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY PROGRAM

This free program encourages our members and their communities to use their voices to become an influential part of the legislative advocacy process. masb.org/grassroots

HISTORY

MASB traces its roots to a 1940 meeting in Allendale, when a small group of board members from Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon counties united to begin sharing information. In 1945, the group became the State Rural School Boards Association. By 1947, boards from 29 counties were participating, and the name was changed to Michigan Rural School Boards Association. With the addition of still more boards, especially from urban areas, the membership voted in February 1949 to become the Michigan Association of School Boards. masb.org/about-masb.aspx

INSURANCE SERVICES

There are several insurance and financial incentives available in cooperation with outside organizations, including the SET Insurance Program, MASB SEG Property/Casualty Pool, SEG Self-Insurer Workers' Compensation Fund and the Michigan Liquid Asset Fund Plus. masb.org/financial-and-insurance-services.aspx

JOINT COLLABORATION

Did you know MASB is part of a consortium of education associations? The Michigan Education Leadership Group consists of MASB, Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators, Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals and Michigan School Business Officials. These organizations have modeled service consolidation by sharing building space, IT support and more. We also work closely with other partners who are committed to Michigan public education. masb.org/michigan-partners.aspx

KEY RELATIONSHIP

It is imperative to understand the distinct and separate roles and responsibilities the board has versus those of its only employee, the superintendent. MASB has several resources to assist in establishing this understanding. masb.org/resources.aspx

LABOR AND LEGAL ADVICE AND SERVICES

Experienced negotiators and consultants are available to guide your board through contract analysis/negotiations, collective bargaining, grievance administration and arbitration. We also have expert legal counsel to provide information regarding current school law, recent court decisions and attorney general opinions. Most importantly, if you have questions, you can contact MASB staff for expert advice at no cost as part of your membership. masb.org/laborrelations and masb.org/legal-counsel.aspx

MASB MEMBERSHIP QUIZ

1. Which of these choices is not the direct responsibility of the Board of Education?

- a. Adopting the annual school district budget.
- b. Suspending students.
- c. Assigning teachers.
- d. Negotiating for purchase of property.

2. Which of these is an ACTUAL role of the superintendent?

- a. Reassigning an elementary principal to another building.
- b. Evaluating staff.
- c. Canceling school because of bad weather.
- d. Developing the annual school district budget.
- e. All of the above.

3. True or False:

By law, school districts MUST provide transportation for students.

4. Which one of these statements is NOT an indicator of an effective board and its members?

- a. The school board and its members publicly support the superintendent and staff.
- b. Playing an active role in committee meetings and work sessions.
- c. Basing decisions, comments and questions on personal experiences and the ideas of the district's parents.
- d. Focusing on issues that improve student achievement.

5. In relation to the collective bargaining process, the board as a whole serves several primary functions, including:

- a. Attaining a fundamental understanding of its legal obligations as well as the dynamics of the negotiations process.
- b. Developing an understanding of the board's role; establishing goals and parameters; designating the board's negotiations team; and overseeing the administrative preparation process.
- c. Ultimately ratifying the terms of the agreement by the negotiations team.
- d. All of the above.

ANSWER KEY: 1. C; 2. E; 3. False; 4. C; 5. D

RESULTS:

4-5 correct: Above average. Kudos, you've done your homework!

2-3 correct: Average. A couple of focused Certified Boardmember Award classes might be helpful.

0-1 correct: Below average. We're here for you — contact MASB today for guidance on improving your board member IQ.

MISSION

To provide high-quality educational leadership services for all Michigan boards of education, and to advocate for an equitable and exceptional public education for all students. [masb.org/about-masb.aspx](https://www.masb.org/about-masb.aspx)

NEWS

One of MASB's responsibilities is keeping its members and the public informed on key education issues. In addition to this magazine, staff produces other publications, e-communications, press releases and the MASB website. If you have any news to share, please send it to comms@masb.org.

[masb.org/publications-and-media.aspx](https://www.masb.org/publications-and-media.aspx)

ONE-DAY EVENTS

We offer numerous one-day events to help your district stay on top of training and topics that are necessary for you to know. From preparing for your organizational meeting to the latest in communication best practices, MASB is your resource. [masb.org/calendar](https://www.masb.org/calendar)

POLICY SERVICES

Effective policies are at the core of successful district governance. MASB has partnered with Neola to work with boards, administrators and committees to develop a comprehensive policy manual that suits your district's needs. [masb.org/policy-services.aspx](https://www.masb.org/policy-services.aspx)

QUALITY

One of MASB's characteristics by which it would like to be defined is quality; the others are value, influential leadership, trust-based relationships, visionary thinking and agile operations. Our priority is delivering outstanding, quality service driven by the needs of our members.

[masb.org/about-masb.aspx](https://www.masb.org/about-masb.aspx)

RECOGNITION

MASB has a number of awards to help school districts celebrate successes and recognize their local partners. Visit the website to learn more about the Certified Boardmember Awards Program, Education Excellence Awards and School Board Recognition Month.

[masb.org/awards-and-recognition.aspx](https://www.masb.org/awards-and-recognition.aspx)

SEARCH SERVICES

Selecting a superintendent is one of the most important decisions faced by a school board. MASB has seasoned consultants who will assist and guide you through the full process to produce the best match for your needs.

[masb.org/executive-search-services.aspx](https://www.masb.org/executive-search-services.aspx)

TRAINING

Through conferences, workshops, seminars, webinars and a year-round schedule of Certified Boardmember Award classes, MASB helps new and veteran board members build their knowledge and sharpen their boardsmanship and leadership skills. Education's complex challenges require leaders who can study problems from a variety of perspectives, and your community expects you to become well-versed in these areas.

[masb.org/miboardawards](https://www.masb.org/miboardawards)

URLS

MASB is wherever you are! Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter for the most up-to-date information impacting public schools. You also can see our latest videos and news on YouTube.

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VIDEO SERVICES

Telling your district's story is more important than ever. MASB offers high-quality, professional video services that allow you to attract talent and keep your community up to date on all the good things you are doing. Email comms@masb.org to find out more!

WEBSITE

All the information in this article and more is available on the MASB website, masb.org. The site can easily be viewed on your mobile devices. masb.org

X-FACTOR

Taking advantage of what MASB offers is the x-factor that differentiates your district's leadership. Make sure you visit our member-specific pages to further explore all the resources and benefits available only to you! masb.org/member-center.aspx

MASB FAST FACTS

- Founded in 1949.
- 4,025 MASB school board members across the state.
- 70-plus Certified Boardmember Award classes covering the basics, as well as topics such as board/superintendent relations, the Open Meetings Act and more.
- 6.9: Average number of years staff have been with MASB.
- President: Jill Fennessy, Tri County Area Schools, Region 3.
- Headquartered in Lansing.

ZERO EXCUSES

With all the programs and services and the variety of ways they can be accessed, there is no reason you and your board can't take advantage of at least one. MASB is here to support you; if you need some guidance or are interested in something in particular, let us know at 517.327.5900 or comms@masb.org.



Shelley Davis Boyd, MBA

Shelley is MASB's Director of Communications, PR & Marketing, and can be reached at sdavisboyd@masb.org or 517.327.5908.

MASB MEMBERSHIP

- Currently, all traditional local districts and ISDs, as well as a few public school academies, can be MASB members.
- More than 489 member districts have used MASB for an executive search; 121 are repeat customers and have used us two or more times.
- In the past three years, public school advocates have made more than 19,000 contacts to legislators.
- MASB has conducted more than 930 in-district workshops in the past five years.
- 485 districts participate in the MASB/SET SEG Property/Casualty Pool and 498 in the MASB/SET SEG Workers' Compensation Pool.

YOUR TEAM

- **Headquarters Staff:** Thirty staffers are here to serve the needs of MASB members and others interested in public education. Led by Executive Director Don Wotruba, CAE, the staff is responsible for developing and implementing all the products and services listed here. masb.org/staff.aspx
- **Board of Directors:** MASB is overseen by a 21-member board made up of two directors from each region and one director each from Groups V, VI and VII. The directors are elected by MASB member districts to serve up to three-year terms. Additionally, there are three at-large directors nominated by the MASB President and approved by the Board. The Board establishes and implements policies and decisions that further MASB's mission and, most importantly, represent you. masb.org/board-of-directors.aspx
- **Adjunct Staff:** MASB has contracted with top executive search, training and labor consultants in the state to assist in the delivery of its programs and services. Our adjuncts have years of experience in education, and many are former board members, superintendents or administrators.

Was this article helpful to you?



A hand with a ring on the ring finger holds a glowing crystal ball. The crystal ball is illuminated from within, casting a warm, golden light. The text "What I Wish I Had Known" is written in a bold, black, cursive font inside the crystal ball. The background is dark, making the glowing ball stand out. The hand is positioned at the top and right sides of the frame, with fingers gently gripping the ball. The crystal ball sits on a piece of coarse, light-colored fabric, possibly burlap, which is draped over a surface. The overall mood is one of mystery and reflection.

What I Wish I Had Known

Compiled by Stacy Bogard, CAE

The January after an election typically means more change than usual at school board tables throughout Michigan. As hundreds of board members take their seats for the first time, MASB asked a group of those elected in 2018 for their thoughts and recommendations. They shared tips on what they've learned after serving for a couple of years, best practices, words of wisdom and more for those starting their terms.

Jihan Aiyash

Hamtramck Public School District

What I didn't know before I took my seat was not everyone has the same purpose for serving. This greatly impacts how your board colleagues approach their role. Some serve to honor student needs, others to serve their own small business needs, to serve administration, to uphold tradition, etc. Whatever your colleagues' purposes are for serving, learn them and work with them—you will have much more productive meetings.

I also didn't know people still think young means unqualified. I was dismissed quite a bit at meetings, and I still am. My advice for new, young board members is don't stop speaking. You're just as qualified. Keep advocating for yourself and your district; be willing to learn and understand.

Kristin Flick

Hanover-Horton School District

I'd highly encourage all new board members to take the CBA classes MASB offers. While I'm still working through them myself, I've found they're even easier to complete now online. I would also encourage members to take time to listen to their stakeholders—students, staff, parents and community members. One thing I didn't realize before taking my seat was the extent to which the school district is "hand tied" when it comes to some legal issues, whether because of labor agreements and/or the Legislature on both the state and federal levels.

Charlie Fulbright

Battle Creek Public Schools

Before I was elected, I thought the trustees just oversaw the district as a general statement. Once I was on the board, I found out there's so much more. The details we look into for budget, policy, voting on school

closures, bonds issues and, most recently, return to learn plans. I learned to ask experienced board members how they interact with the public. Parents ask me why a teacher gave their child a bad grade or why a certain decision was made. The board has nothing to do with that on-the-ground interaction. Learning my role and duties as a board member helped clarify communication between me and community members.

My biggest suggestion would be to always continue learning. I don't come from an education background, and when I saw all the CBA classes offered by MASB, I jumped at them. I've learned so much from the CBA classes, from basics to advanced knowledge in different areas. There's always something to learn to better yourself in your personal life and as a board trustee.

Mara Greatorex

Dexter Community Schools

When I ran for the board, I knew if I won, I would be taking the place of an incumbent, so my first question was, how would the board treat me as a newcomer? Thankfully, it was something I didn't need to worry about. In Dexter, we have a mostly harmonious board that was very welcoming as we are all working toward the same goal—ensuring all students are served in our district.

Several board members reached out to me after the election to set up a time to meet individually. Our board has the privilege of a member who has served more than 40 years. He and I had lunch, and he filled me in on the history of our district. One of the other board members suggested I take CBA 101: Fundamentals of School Board Service. I had no idea there were classes that would help me understand what board service was like. I took the course in December, so I had a good idea of what to expect at my first meeting in January. The course was also nice because I met other newly elected board members and chatted with them.

I knew being on the school board wasn't going to be easy. A lot of work and preparation goes into being a board member—especially if you're on the policy committee! Do your homework before the meeting, and if you don't understand something, ask a question. I came onto a board that collectively had more than 100 years of service, so they were used to the procedures and what would be coming up during the year. I'll admit I was a little nervous to ask questions at first, but I did eventually find my voice. My advice for new board members is to find

your voice as soon as possible. Remember you are there to represent the community, and if you have a question, it probably resembles one from the community as well.

Be open to discussion and changing your mind. Remember you aren't in this alone—your fellow board members are there to represent the community as well, so respect them and what they bring to the table. And above all else, always ask yourself if what you're doing is for the good of the students and staff in your district; they are what matter most.

Mark Hayes

Beaverton Schools


Being a teacher for 34 years gave me the opportunity to see firsthand the inner workings of school boards through a teacher union perspective. Being on the opposite side of that scenario has allowed me to appreciate what a school board member encounters from a multitude of perspectives. Those experiences allow me to work from both sides of the table and, as a result, we can usually come up with a reasonable resolution everyone can agree upon.

The eye-opening thing I was not ready for is how strictly board meetings are conducted. The amount of work behind the scenes before a meeting ever convenes took me by surprise. Transparency is at the forefront in everything I do as a board member. I firmly believe in that and would encourage all new board members to do the same.

I'd advise all new board members to ASK questions! If you don't know or understand something, have someone clarify it for you. There's no such thing as a dumb question. You cannot make informed decisions if you don't understand what's being discussed.

New board members should be prepared to be approached by community members seeking answers and resolutions to personal problems. New board members have to know the chain of command and direct those people in that direction.

The last piece of advice I'd give to a new school board member is always stay informed and do your homework. Look over your school board packets and know what's coming at your next meeting. Know how to read your financials and understand them. Enjoy the process and make sure you know what you're voting on.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a glowing, spherical object. The hand is wearing a large, ornate ring with a dark stone and intricate metalwork. The background is dark, and the light from the orb creates a warm, golden glow. The orb is resting on a textured, burlap-like surface.

Brenda Kelley

Bronson Community Schools

I have some notes I wrote for myself before my first meeting and keep in my board binder for reference:

1. Don't define choices too narrowly—there may be more than two choices.
2. Don't take a thin slice of facts into consideration while ignoring the preponderance of evidence.
3. Don't turn a blind eye to the obvious to see your own biased view.
4. Don't accept blind spots—sometimes we have blind spots because we don't know what we don't know!
5. Research—think outside the box/be resourceful!
6. Put facts into context, hear all sides, check for bias and discern the truth.
7. Remember that true wisdom = knowledge + understanding.
8. Most importantly, LISTEN, THINK and then speak.

Nicole Lewis

Saugatuck Public Schools

Communication is critical. Ask how—and how often—your board communicates amongst itself, with the administration and with the community. As a new board member, I wasn't fully aware of Open Meetings Act rules or how our district handled communication that wasn't directly sent to parents.

Be prepared to step in and get your hands dirty, maybe sooner than you'd think. Spend your first few meetings learning the ropes and doing a lot of listening, but also be confident speaking up when you have relevant skills or perspective on the situation. Board service is so much more than participating in meetings—often you can be the driver of positive change in your school district.

If you have children who attend school in the district, give them an age-appropriate glimpse into the workings of the school board. My kindergartner knows I volunteer to help make her school a great place to learn. My eighth grader knows the school board and administrators meet regularly and publicly to discuss policy that directly affects his education. Giving kids that greater perspective is a wonderful learning tool.

Jennie Urtel

South Lyon Community Schools

I went into the position fairly knowledgeable about what a board member does. I was aware of how schools are funded and the basics of how schools operate, as well as the time commitment needed to be a board member. I wasn't aware that board members aren't included in every minute decision and detail of the district. Our main responsibilities are to approve the budget, set policy and hire a superintendent. One item I didn't necessarily think about that has been an interesting and sometimes heartbreaking aspect of being a board member is student discipline related to long-term suspension or expulsion.

Another aspect of being a board member is thinking about the district and student body as a whole. People need to understand there are thousands of kids in a district with thousands of different issues and needs. The board has to make a decision that's best for all, not just one group or type of student.

A conversation with the superintendent is highly recommended. Having a discussion to hear the superintendent's expectations of themselves, the direction they see the district going and how, as a board member, you can help. It's also beneficial for the board member to let the superintendent know their expectations for them and the district.

Finally, respect and listen to your fellow board members. You may not always agree, but respect for each person, their decisions and the decision of the majority is key to a working board.

Jan VanGasse

Norway-Vulcan Area Schools

Effective boards adopt policies that give direction to the superintendent and staff, enabling them to manage the district. It's important for new board members to ask what the bylaws and policies are and how the superintendent and staff are being held accountable for policy implementation.

Boards approve and monitor the budget and district contracts and hire and evaluate the superintendent. It's important for board members to become familiar with and ask questions about the budget, financial reports and employment contracts. It's also important to ask about the evaluation of the superintendent—the timeline, procedure, goals and evaluation criteria. The budget should be based on the goals and objectives outlined by the school board, and a new school member should ask questions about the board's strategic plan and the district's school improvement plan.

I'd encourage new board members to ask questions about state law regarding school boards, such as the Open Meetings Act, and to know which items must be considered in closed sessions or in appeals hearings. It's also important to ask what the established board meeting protocol is and to ask about board committees and how they work.

I also believe it's important for new board members to ask if the board engages in regular, periodic self-evaluation to determine effectiveness.

Was this article helpful to you?



Stacy Bogard, CAE

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Six Areas to Address When Designing Your New Board Member Onboarding Program

By Debbie Stair, M.N.M.L.

WHY?

When most people hear “onboarding,” they think of a process companies carry out when hiring new employees. If the practice is good for employees, it should be good for new governing-body members as well. Recent statistics from the Human Capital Institute indicate that when onboarding is done well, it can improve retention by over 80%.¹ Surprisingly, almost 90% of the same organizations that responded to the survey said they do a poor job of onboarding. One reason cited was inconsistent implementation of the process.

Onboarding—often referred to as orientation—should be a formalized process. Boards can do this by determining the training components and then taking action at the board table to include the identified onboarding method in their bylaws or operating procedures. By following this methodology, it no longer depends on who the board leader is at any given time. If you asked colleagues on your own board what type of onboarding experience they had, would their answers be the same? Would they even be similar? Odds are everyone had a very different experience based on the leader at the time they began their board service. If that’s the case, now is the time to make sure incoming members of your governance team have comparable levels of support provided—not only for this election cycle but for future ones too.

There’s no internship program for new board members. They will be voting on agenda items at their very first meeting, and the community expects them to be knowledgeable about those issues. However, according to a National School Boards Association study, “Without some preservice or orientation program, it is estimated that it will take at least two years of school board service before board members gain the background and confidence to perform effectively and confidently.”² A board is only as effective as its least-prepared member.

WH

What

How

Why

Who

When

here

WHO?

In most cases, the board president and superintendent are the two people who meet with new members, although the process may look different in your district. The board president typically reviews matters relating directly to the board. One exception is when the current board presi-

dent is personally on the ballot. If that's the case, orientation is often delegated to the vice president or another officer. The superintendent typically handles orientation on district-related issues such as finance, curriculum, operations, etc. In larger districts, new members may meet with multiple district personnel as part of the orientation process.

Using mentors is another way to provide early support in a new member's tenure. Mentors are often senior board members who exhibit a clear understanding of the board's role. They often reach out between board meetings and even attend classes together.

HOW?

Don't overwhelm your new board members by trying to give them every bit of the information you feel they need all at once. Design a timeframe that breaks up the information in digestible segments. A best-case scenario would be providing some information prior to the filing deadline, then prior to the actual election and immediately following the election. If that was not the case for this election cycle, get started right away.

Determine what new members need to know for the first few meetings and address that at the outset. For example, it's not likely they need to understand the district's audit process when they won't be faced with it at the board table for another 9 months. It's quite possible they won't remember what was shared by the time they actually need to use it. If your board uses an annual calendar to inform the members about major projects or initiatives that will be discussed over the next 12 months, that can be used to determine when to provide information in a timely, bite-sized manner.

Don't forget to include a learning plan for your new team members. In addition to the orientation activities provided in-district, let them know about other opportunities to become more knowledgeable on specific topics, such as classes and conferences. Funds dedicated to board development in the annual budget demonstrate a commitment to high levels of growth for all.

WHERE?

Multiple options for where to deliver this information exist, with the most common choices being a combination of meeting informally over coffee, lunch or Zoom, as well as possible meetings with district personnel at the district offices or virtually. Regardless of where the meetings are scheduled, ensure that distractions and interruptions are kept to a minimum and the focus is on the new member.

WHEN?

There are multiple opportunities to provide useful information throughout the election timeline—prior to filing, prior to the election and post-election. It's never too early to provide guidance on basic roles and responsibilities as well as district-specific information. Once the election is certified, the comprehensive approach should begin. There's no need to wait until they officially take office in January; give them a head start by beginning right away. And don't forget to include steps for new members appointed between elections as well.

WHAT?

As you develop your process of what to cover, think in terms of three major areas:

- Orientation to the board.
- Orientation to the board/superintendent relationship.
- Orientation to the district.

As it relates to boardsmanship, new board members may need clarification regarding the roles and responsibilities of a governance team. Two helpful documents, "The Eight Traits of an Effective School Board" and MASB's "Governance Standards of Effective School Boards," and more can be downloaded from masb.org/getonboardmi.

Finally, be sure to provide district-specific information such as dates for upcoming meetings or trainings, copies of all policies, the most recently passed budget and any other key information. MASB's downloadable "A School Board Member's Resource Guide: First-Year Orientation" includes a useful checklist.

¹ Human Capital Institute. Website. Retrieved from hci.org, Nov. 12, 2020.

² National School Boards Association. *Becoming a Better Board Member: A Guide to Effective School Board Service (Fourth Edition)*.



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Was this article helpful to you?



A School Finance Primer: Where Does Funding Come From?

By Kent Cartwright, CPA, Ed.S.

As any experienced school board member knows, district budgets are the result of countless hours of work by the board and the district leadership team. In a perfect world, the budget reflects the student achievement goals of the district, with the curriculum driving the budget development discussion.¹ This process is easier said than done, particularly during the past decade of stagnant state funding and skyrocketing costs. The unfortunate reality is boards often find a multitude of people willing to help spend new district resources, but such assistance becomes scarce when funding cuts must be made. Yet ignoring budgetary concerns is fiscally irresponsible, can lead to significant sanctions and, in extreme cases, even result in district dissolution.² Inadequate fiduciary oversight has historically closed more Michigan school districts than has poor academic results.

To better understand Michigan's current school funding, it helps to look at our past. In the early 1900s, Michigan provided local districts a set amount of money per student, regardless of need or locale. While this method was easy to understand, it created funding disparities, especially in districts with large special needs populations. From the 1920s through the 1950s, Michigan attempted to fix these disparities using the concepts of foundation formulas and categorical funding.³ While somewhat effective, these funding concepts still fell short of addressing the needs of all students.

Court challenges in the 1960s caused Michigan to explore a "power equalization" funding system, where state school aid supplemented locally raised school taxes whenever there was a difference between the local tax revenues and the guaranteed state funding baseline. Districts that raised more than the guaranteed tax base could keep the excess, while the state guaranteed all districts received a minimum amount of funding. In this manner, less-wealthy districts enjoyed the protection of a base level of funding, while affluent communities were free to more fully support their local schools through increased taxes.⁴

While initially effective, by the late 1980s, this system resulted in soaring property taxes while per-pupil funding inequities again became widespread.

By 1993, the lowest funded district in Michigan saw \$3,277 per pupil, while the highest funded district received \$10,358 per pupil.⁵ Partly motivated by these disparities, in 1994 the Michigan Legislature enacted Proposal A, the school funding reform model that remains in place today. The legislative intent was to cut property taxes, reduce district reliance on local millage votes for funding, assure a minimum level of revenue for all K-12 districts, and reduce the financial disparities among districts.

To finance this new legislation, Proposal A cut homeowner property taxes by 47% while raising the sales tax 2%, along with modest adjustments to a handful of other taxes. Starting in 1994, the lowest-spending districts received accelerated funding increases designed to quickly reach a minimum "base foundation." Higher-spending districts also enjoyed increases, but at a markedly smaller rate.⁴ In this manner, all districts saw increased funding, but the gap between the highest- and lowest-spending districts was reduced over time. As a result, the \$2,400 gap between the minimum and maximum state foundation grants that existed in 1993-1994 had been reduced to \$538 by 2018-2019.⁶

As with most legislation, Proposal A included exceptions for special situations. The most notable was making allowances for 43 "Hold Harmless" districts. These districts had per-pupil revenues that exceeded the state foundation maximums in 1993-1994, so mechanisms were put in place to maintain their higher funding through local property tax levies. While such exceptions flew in the face of Michigan's funding disparity reduction goals, the political realities at that time required these accommodations if the overall funding reform was to have any chance of successful legislative passage.



Perhaps one of Proposal A's more significant legacies is it essentially moved the responsibility of district funding away from local school boards and toward state government. As a result, the Michigan Legislature now plays a substantial role in determining school funding levels each year—a role that once rested mostly with local boards of education. In a typical year, the Governor generates a budget proposal in January that includes proposed base and minimum per-pupil allotments, along with allocations for special populations and educational initiatives. Both the Michigan House and Senate create their own versions of a school aid budget, each reflecting that chamber's education-related priorities. This is followed by a conference committee meeting to hammer out the differences among the three proposals, resulting in a unified bill that is acceptable to all parties. Once the bill passes a full vote in both chambers, it goes to the Governor for signature. During this process, school boards

exert their greatest influence by regularly communicating with their local legislators regarding school funding legislation and the impact each proposal may have on their local districts.

Budgeting and fiduciary oversight can be one of the most challenging, thankless and sometimes contentious chores a school board faces. Proposal A has changed the degree of impact school boards have on their local finances, often requiring these leaders to interact with state-level legislators if they wish to influence local district finances. District leaders and school board members must be highly conversant in the details of their budget and willing to communicate their concerns with their state officials if they are to properly guide the budgetary and academic success of their students.

¹ Odden, A.R. *Improving student learning when budgets are tight*. Corwin, Thousand Oaks, Calif., 2012.

² *The Revised School Code of 1976*. MCL 380.12. Retrieved from <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-380-12>, Oct. 30, 2020.

³ Griffith, M. *Understanding state school funding: The first step toward quality reforms*. Retrieved from [ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/02/86/10286.pdf](https://clearinghouse/01/02/86/10286.pdf), Oct. 30, 2020.

⁴ Cullen, J.B. and Loeb, S. *School finance reform in Michigan: Evaluating Proposal A*. Retrieved from cepa.stanford.edu/content/school-finance-reform-michigan-evaluating-proposal, Oct. 30, 2020.

⁵ Addonizio, M.F., Kearney, C.P. and Prince, H.J. *Michigan's high-wire act*. *Journal of Education Finance*, 20(3), 234-269, 1995.

⁶ Wicksall, B. *Fiscal brief: Basics of the foundation allowance—FY 2018-19 update*. House Fiscal Agency. Retrieved from house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/Alpha/Fiscal_Brief_Basics_of_the_Foundation_Allowance_FY19_Update_Nov2018.pdf, Oct. 27, 2020.



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A Sign of the Times

An Ever-Evolving Community Relations Strategy

By Greg Rokisky

Whether you have been on your school board for 20 years or you're a newly elected board member stepping into your role for the first time, there's no pause button when it comes to how quickly things are evolving. Given 2020's addition of a global pandemic, reckonings with racial injustice and polarizing politics (among other things), it's no wonder we're spending time discussing the importance of community relations with boards of education.

Think about how many of your interactions likely occurred in very different ways in the past year. We don't have the luxury of those serendipitous run-ins at the grocery store and, if we do, we are wearing masks and remaining socially distanced. We don't see our colleagues, co-workers or even family and friends in the same capacity, and we have made many other sacrifices to slow the spread of COVID-19.

But let's take the coronavirus out of the equation for a moment. If we rewind 16 years to 2005, here's a list of things that didn't exist or had just barely had emerged: TikTok (2016), Siri (2011), Zoom (2011), the first iPhone (2007), Netflix streaming (2007), Twitter (2006), Amazon Prime (2005), Google Maps (2005) and Facebook (2004).

Without these technological amenities, think about how much more difficult it would be for you to solidify and maintain bonds or, in some cases, simply navigate day-to-day life.

If you wouldn't miss these tech tools, I imagine you fall in a minority of our population these days. When someone orders something online, the norm is to expect it to arrive within a week at most. If we want to watch a movie, most trust they can turn on their TV and pick something from their online streaming platform of choice or purchase, download and watch immediately. Many of us no longer rely on a physical map or printed-out MapQuest directions to guide us on our route when we have a GPS app available on our smartphone.

Everything continues to change around us—and at an alarming pace. Therefore, how a school district strengthens its relationship with its community must also be ever evolving and multifaceted. This is especially true as it relates to these areas: diversity, equity and inclusion; communicating and interacting digitally; and strengthening relationships with our community in a post-pandemic world.

REFLECTING OUR COMMUNITIES

This section focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion, and I want to point out I am a queer white male. This means I benefit from significant privilege and lack the firsthand experience of inequality regularly faced by other members of marginalized communities to which I don't belong. In this section, I pull in some personal experience and data, but I am in no way a licensed DEI practitioner. I welcome direct feedback from members of any communities who feel misrepresented.

How often do you have discussions at your board table about the demographics and makeup of your district's community? Do you know the prominent age groups, the percentage of English-speaking community members and what other languages are prevalent?

If the answer is yes, that's great! Next, is your board a good reflection of those demographics—in ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, political ideology and any other groups present in your community?

Finally, when revisiting and updating policies for your district, do you view them through an inclusive and equitable lens?

It's easy for us to stop with the "D" in DEI. Often, diversity is a visible, inherent part of our society. If that same diversity present in society isn't reflective in the organizations and subgroups we create, then we're already missing the mark. What we need to focus on next is inclusion—or sense of be-

longing—and, most importantly, on equity, where the work really happens. Addressing issues of equity for students, for policies that impact hiring and how meetings are held, and other areas where a board impacts decision-making will create support and access for all individuals and groups.

Prioritizing DEI at the board table will have myriad other positive effects. A 2017 study by Florida State University revealed that a more diverse school board can lead to more equitable school punishment among Black, white and Hispanic students.¹

When we start to learn how our biases affect our decisions and view district matters through a DEI lens, we can actively seek out systems, perspectives and practices that will create checks and balances for a more diverse, inclusive and equitable school system.

COMMUNICATING AND INTERACTING DIGITALLY

We hit a significant digital milestone in 2020. Not only is nearly 60% of the world's population online, the latest data suggests more than half of the world's total population now uses social media as of last year.² Additionally, in February 2020, Amazon surpassed 150 million global Amazon Prime subscribers.³

What is my takeaway to information such as this?

People expect information and results faster than they ever have before. Gone are the days when school districts could simply send a letter home as the only communications method about important news—at least without significant criticism, that is.

We speed up information exchange by introducing various digital communications tools to reach our target audiences: email, social media, websites and maybe even a mobile app, among others.

Once you move into the role of board member, it's hard to step away from having a vocal individual presence via these tools—especially on social media. There are ramifications to going "off the rails," specifically legal ones such as violating the Open Meetings Act by discussing board issues with other board members in a digital space (like a Facebook thread). Additionally, whether you realize it or not, as an elected official you are a public figure, and you have more eyes on you under a magnifying glass.

Instead of accidentally creating a larger headache through personal social media

or trying to editorialize on district events, I teach board members in MASB's CBA 351: Social Media course where the real power lies with a board of education's role in their own and the district's social media strategy. The following are just a preview:

Social Media Starts With You (Just Maybe not how You Think): As you likely know, a board of education's role in developing a district's strategic plan with guiding goals, objectives and measurement for success is critical. Additionally, great communications, PR and marketing strategy always tie back to organizational goals—in this case, your district's strategic plan. Encourage whoever on staff is responsible for your district's social media to tie social media goals and content back to supporting priorities outlined in your strategic plan. This ensures that close to every post published reflects your work as a board and helps further those goals. You can view an example of a very raw social media strategy document that does this at bit.ly/MASB-social.

Amplify, Don't Create: Once the process of tying social media content back to strategic goals is in place, you can rest assured content is reflecting your objectives as a board of education and as a district. Therefore, all you need to share on your personal channels is content going out on your district's social media. Simply amplify that content by sharing it (without editorializing or adding your own spin).

Social Media Policy: Most importantly, before you get too far entrenched in the previous two items, make sure your district has a social media policy. If you don't, prioritize creating one. Neola offers a sample district social media usage policy that you can use as a starting point whether you're a Neola subscriber or not.⁴ If you do have a policy in place, make sure it's revisited regularly. Remember, things are changing constantly; this policy should as well, and outline what usage looks like internally between staff, for students, for the board, and so on.

STRENGTHENING RELATIONS WITH OUR COMMUNITY POST-COVID-19

Burnout in 2020 was real—and if you weren't there, you likely felt some sort of strain. A survey in July 2020 by Monster reported that despite 69% of employees experiencing burnout symptoms while working from home, the majority (59%) were taking less time off than they normally would, and 42% of those still working from home were not planning to take any time off to decompress.⁵

While we're all likely tired of virtual everything at this point, there are some obvious benefits to keeping things in some sort of hybrid environment moving forward when we're on the other side of the pandemic. This provides more accessibility and it opens lines of communication. I am hopeful districts and organizations alike look at opportunities to develop a new normal rather than going back to exactly how things were done. This includes how we hold meetings, offer events and communicate with our communities. Of course, this approach has its own inequities, given barriers to technology and internet access in areas of our state, and we must continue to advocate to invoke change.

I can personally attest that in 2020 I became more engaged—whether it was sitting in on more local government meetings from the comfort of my own couch, phone banking on the weekend for local, statewide or national issues, or other ways that provided equal impact with added convenience.

Consider the ways you can integrate virtual opportunities and technology in a post-COVID-19 world that allow your community to also become more engaged and educated in how the public education system operates in your community.

A FORK IN THE ROAD

We all know things will continue to evolve and change. Whenever I instruct groups around social media, I remind them they can choose not to embrace and use social

media. However, they must be aware of what they're giving up in reaching those audiences and the consequences that will surface if they don't compensate for those human expectations of speed, timeliness and consistency.

The same theory applies to everything else discussed in this article. You can choose as a district to not lean into any of the demands around DEI, communicating digitally or strengthening relations in a post-pandemic new normal. However, I encourage your district to be prepared for the consequences that may come as a result.

¹ Irby, K. *FSU researchers find school board diversity reduces school suspensions.* Retrieved from <https://news.fsu.edu/news/education-society/2017/08/23/fsu-researchers-find-school-board-diversity-reduces-school-suspensions/>, Nov. 13, 2020.

² Hootsuite. Retrieved from hootsuite.com/pages/digital-2020, Nov. 13, 2020.

³ Keyes, D. *Amazon has surpassed 150 million Prime subscribers globally.* Retrieved from www.businessinsider.com/amazon-surpasses-150-million-prime-subscribers-2020-2, Nov. 13, 2020.

⁴ Neola. *Use of Social Media.* Retrieved from <https://neola.com/wp-content/uploads/USE-OF-SOCIAL-MEDIA-po7544.pdf>, Nov. 13, 2020.

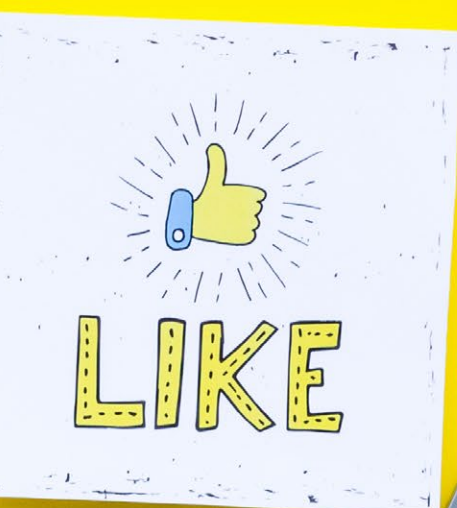
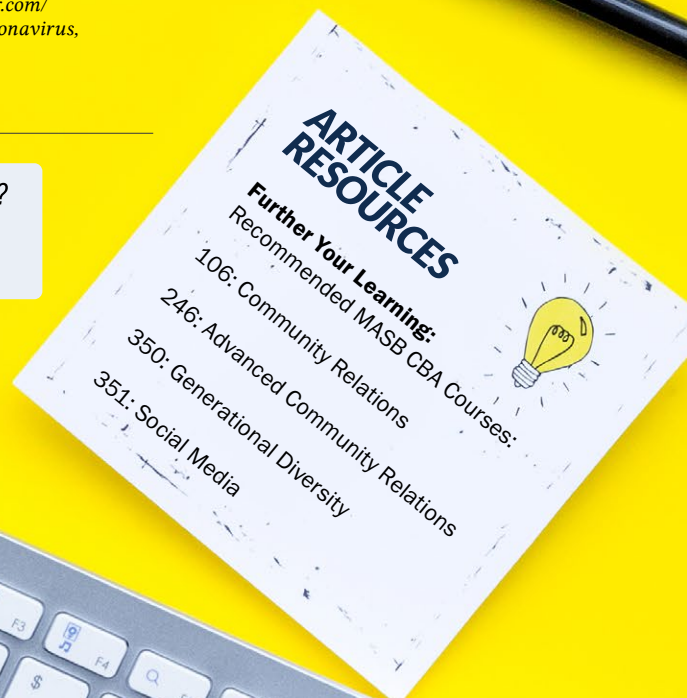
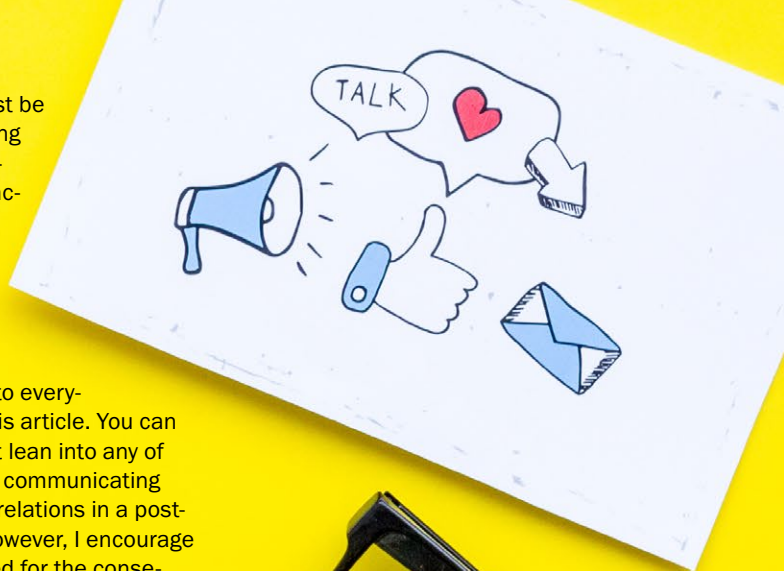
⁵ Monster. *Work in the Time of Coronavirus.* Retrieved from <https://learnmore.monster.com/poll-results-from-work-in-the-time-of-coronavirus>, Nov. 13, 2020.



Greg Rokisky

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Honing in on Roles and Responsibilities

By Deb Macon, MBA

Congratulations—you did it! Campaigning is wrapped, you won the election and took the oath of office. You are now eager to take your seat at the board table and govern.

The last six words of the oath of office keep running around in your head, “. . .to the best of my ability.” What do these words mean, and what exactly are your new roles and responsibilities?

MASB’s signature Certified Boardmember Awards Program offers comprehensive professional development for school board members as a pathway, including CBA 101: Fundamentals of School Board Service and so much more.

Citizen oversight of local government is the cornerstone of democracy in the United States. School board members are locally elected to serve as public officials of the state of Michigan and entrusted with governing the community’s schools.

The role of the school board is to ensure that school districts are responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of their communities.¹

Five areas of responsibility known as **The Key Work of School Boards**² are executed in partnership with the superintendent. Together, the board and superintendent form the district’s board leadership team. Boards govern and function in an oversight role by performing these five major responsibilities:

VISION

Of all the roles and responsibilities of governing boards, none is more central to the purpose of local governance than ensuring the establishment of a long-term vision for the school system. The vision reflects the consensus of the community, the board and the district staff regarding what students need to achieve their highest potential.

ACCOUNTABILITY

A culture of accountability requires the board leadership team to:

- Set clear goals and expectations informed by data.
- Demonstrate commitment toward improving governance.
- Believe in the abilities of your district’s students and staff.
- Monitor organizational performance, improvement efforts and achievement of district goals.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Take action when progress is not evident.³

POLICY

School boards adopt policies that guide how the district operates. Policies reflect essential board governance statements, such as broad authorizations of programs and services. Policies should clearly define what the board intends or requires, leaving the “how” of implementation and administration to the superintendent or their designees.⁴

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

A successful board devotes a significant amount of time and attention to nurturing its relationships and encouraging two-way communication with the various publics it serves.⁵

A clearly written **chain of command** is the most effective tool for board members to leverage when questions arise from parents and community members. Parent and community questions are best addressed directly with the educator in charge of the class or program.



THE KEY WORK OF SCHOOL BOARDS²

RELATIONSHIPS

Without good working relationships, even the best plans cannot come to fruition. To maintain the support needed for a successful school district, school boards must build these relationships internally—with each other, the superintendent and the staff—and externally—with parents, the community, other local government, and state and federal officials.⁵

¹ California School Boards Association. *Roles and Responsibilities*. Retrieved from csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/EffectiveGovernance/RoleandResponsibilitiesofSBMs.aspx, Nov. 17, 2020.

² National School Boards Association. *The Key Work of School Boards*. Retrieved from nsba.org/Resources/The-Key-Work-of-School-Boards, Nov. 17, 2020.

³ Ohio School Boards Association. *Accountability*. Retrieved from ohioschoolboards.org/accountability, Nov. 17, 2020.

⁴ Texas Association of School Boards. *School Board Policy Versus Regulation: What's the Difference?* Retrieved from tasb.org/members/enhance-district/school-board-policy-and-regulation.aspx, Nov. 17, 2020.

⁵ Colorado Association of School Boards. *Building and Maintaining Relationships in Your Community*. Retrieved from <https://casb.memberclicks.net/building-and-maintaining-relationships-in-your-community>, Nov. 17, 2020.

⁶ New Jersey School Boards Association. *Who Does What in Public School Governance*, 2014.

⁷ Holland Public Schools. *Chain of Command/How to Communicate*. Retrieved from hollandpublicschools.org/the-district/school-board/, Nov. 17, 2020.

⁸ Preston Joint School District #201. *Board Documents for School Board Members*. Retrieved from prestonidahoschools.org/Content2/board-documents-for-school-board-members, Nov. 17, 2020.

BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COLLABORATION⁶

To ensure the board and superintendent maintain the best relationship in carrying out their respective duties, each member of the board leadership team follows some basic guidelines

FOR THE BOARD

- Not acting without consulting the superintendent and getting his/her recommendations.
- Recognizing the superintendent as the district's educational leader and listening to him/her as such.
- Not confusing the role of setting policy for the district with that of running the schools.
- Not surprising the superintendent.

FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Keeping the board fully informed at all times.
- Implementing policies of the board in the most effective and efficient manner and evaluating the results.
- Recognizing the board as the final authority in the school district and conveying that recognition to the rest of the staff.
- Not surprising the board.

Was this article helpful to you?



Deb Macon, MBA

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SAMPLE CHAIN OF COMMAND #1: HOLLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS⁷

Parents are often discouraged when they attempt to communicate with central office administrators or school board members and are sent back to building-based officials to resolve a problem their child may be experiencing in school. To prevent that frustration, parents can become informed about the “chain of command,” learning where to begin the communication sequence regarding their problem or concern.

Each situation should be first addressed at whatever level the initial action was taken, with appeals moving on to the next level in the chain of command.

On Matters Involving Instruction/Curriculum

- Classroom Teacher
- Principal
- Director of School Improvement
- Superintendent
- Board of Education

On Matters Involving Special Education Services

- Classroom Teacher
- Principal
- Director of Student Services
- Superintendent
- Board of Education

On Matters Involving Athletics

- Coach
- Athletic Director
- Superintendent
- Board of Education

On Matters Involving Student Discipline

- Classroom Teacher
- Principal
- Deputy Superintendent
- Superintendent
- Board of Education

On Matters Involving Facilities/Grounds/Building

- Principal
- Facilities/Ground Supervisor
- Deputy Superintendent
- Superintendent
- Board of Education

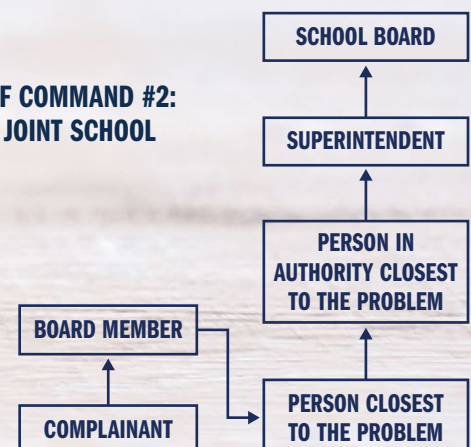
On Matters Involving Transportation

- Bus Driver
- Transportation Supervisor
- Deputy Superintendent
- Superintendent
- Board of Education

On Matters Involving Food/Nutrition Services

- Principal
- Food/Nutrition Services Director
- Deputy Superintendent
- Superintendent
- Board of Education

SAMPLE CHAIN OF COMMAND #2: PRESTON, IDAHO JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT #201⁸



Even the Best-Laid Plans...

By Jay Bennett, M.Ed.

In “To a Mouse,” Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote, “. . .the best-laid schemes of mice and men go oft awry.”¹

In 1785—more than 230 years ago—the Ploughmen Poet recognized even the most well-thought-out plans, policies and practices were no match for the unexpected or, in the case of the mouse, an errant plow.

Has your board thought about what happens when it comes time to replace your superintendent? How are you going to make sure your district doesn’t succumb to the same fate as the mouse nest in Burns’ iconic poem?

How will you keep things from going awry?

A well-thought-out and appropriately executed succession plan could be just the answer your board is looking for.

Don McAdams, Founder and Chairman of the Center for Reform of School Systems, believes that, “Along with their govern-

ing boards, superintendents also have a responsibility to plan for the future of their school districts.”²

So, why should you have a plan and where should you start?

Let’s start with the why.

A 2018 study by the Broad Center puts the average superintendent tenure at six years. Numerous factors impact an administrator’s length of stay in a district, including the size of the district, percentage of low-income students, racial makeup of the student population and the gender of the superintendent. Female superintendents have tenures that average around 15 months shorter than those of males.

“Researchers also found that tenures were around 19 months shorter in districts with more than 100,000 students, three-and-a-half years shorter in districts with the highest percentages of low-income students,

and less than half as long in districts with the highest percentages of students of color,” the report noted.³

In other words, there is a high likelihood your district will encounter a superintendent transition during your service as a board member.

With that “why” in mind, let’s look at the process and the plan.

School boards that decide to take on succession planning are often viewed as supportive of seamless change and continuity. Permanency of leadership should also be a factor of importance to a board and its district. As such, continuity of leadership can help ensure that a district’s direction is not disrupted by a constant change in leadership. Hiring from within the district is one way to maintain this continuity. Nearly three out of four leaders hired from within are still serving as their district’s superintendent three years later.⁴

Daniel A. Domenech, Executive Director of the Alexandria, Va.-based American Association of School Administrators, said that makes sense. "Homegrown leaders often have local roots that keep them in place, and they are already familiar with a system that can take a year or more for a newcomer to learn."

But that familiarity also can make it harder for in-house candidates to get hired in the first place.

"School board members often come in and are looking to make changes, and they see an in-house candidate as part of the system they want to change," he said. "But an in-house candidate who makes it has a much better chance of being successful as a superintendent in the long run."⁵

Research also tells us that superintendent tenure has an impact on student achievement, and districts with long-serving superintendents experience a positive and significant impact on student academic performance.⁶ Given this, it makes sense to ensure that your district provides an environment where your superintendent can thrive while also having a system and plan in place to develop the next long-serving administrator who may already be working in your district.

The most successful plans are those that encompass the entire district.

Promising, successful and willing teachers should be encouraged and prepared to become principals. If they flourish in their role as a building leader, they can continue to learn from successful administrators within the district and participate in job shadowing and professional development that will enhance their progression.

Tina Kerr, Ph.D. Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators, says professional development should be seen as "a continuous and career-long obligation for administrators that helps build confidence and credibility." This not only benefits the district with a pipeline of future superintendent candidates, but it also helps ensure the best, most highly trained people are leading your buildings and central office.

MASB tracks every superintendent transition happening in the state. Michigan is currently comprised of 537 local school districts and 56 intermediate school districts. Over the past five years, MASB has tracked an average of 79 superintendent transitions annually. This works out to approximately 13% of Michigan school districts experiencing a change in leadership each year.

I leave you with this quote from Whitney Young Jr.: "It is better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one, than to have an opportunity and not be prepared." It's only a matter of time until your district

and board are part of that 13%. Are you prepared to tackle a leadership transition?

Learn more about developing a succession plan through our CBA 224 class or schedule a planning session by contacting MASB's Leadership Development and Executive Search Services Department at 517.327.5904 or dstair@masb.org.

¹ Wikipedia. *To a Mouse*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_a_Mouse, Oct. 30, 2020.

² McAdams, D.R. *Planning for Your Own Succession*. Retrieved from www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=7334, Oct. 30, 2020.

³ Riddell, R. *Report: Average Superintendent Tenure About 6 Years*. Retrieved from educationdive.com/news/report-average-superintendent-tenure-about-6-years/523089/, Oct. 30, 2020.

⁴ Grissom, J.A. and Andersen, S. *Why Superintendents Turn Over*. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0002831212462622>, Oct. 30, 2020.

⁵ Dockery Sparks, S. *Study: More Churn at the Top in Large Districts*. Retrieved from edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/12/05/13turnover_ep.h32.html?r=1141078375, Oct. 30, 2020.

⁶ Waters, J.T. and Marzano, R.J. *School District Leadership That Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*. Retrieved from mcrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/McREL-research-paper_Sept2006_District-Leadership-That-Works-Effect-of-Superintendent-Leadership-on-Student-Achievement.pdf, Oct. 30, 2020.



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Was this article helpful to you?



Does Your Budget Truly Reflect Your District's Commitment to ?

By Blake Prewitt

One of the most important functions of a board of education is establishing the yearly budget. Too often, this might be thought of as a routine process for the board, but the budget truly drives the direction of the district. As board members, what steps are you taking to ensure you're allocating funds to the areas you've designated as important?

There is a lot of research and rhetoric around equity in schools. How equity is achieved looks different for each district primarily depending on the makeup of its student body and surrounding community. From the Center for Public Education, "equity is achieved when all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school."¹

The Lakeview Board of Education made a commitment to equity a number of years ago. Trying to operationalize equity is difficult. Too often, boards and administration think they know how to "help" their marginalized populations, but they haven't done the work to truly listen to these populations. It's important to guard against White Savior Complex by the Board of Education and administration.

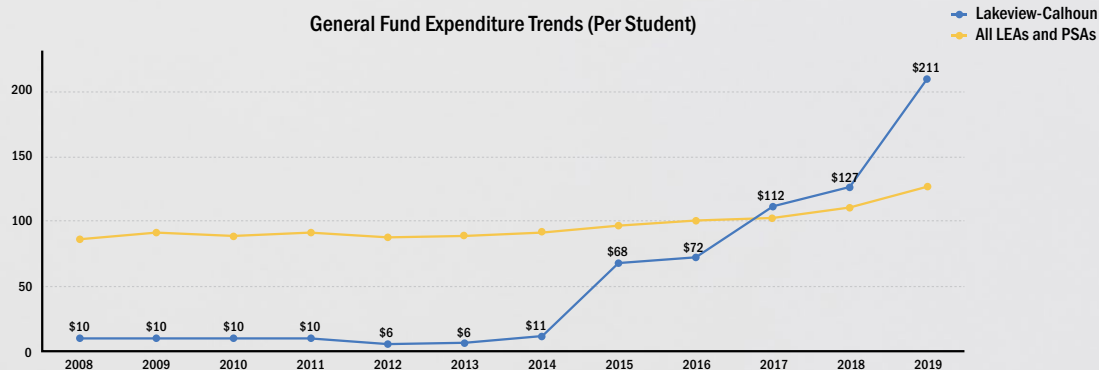
Our strategic planning process was focused on trying to engage these diverse voices in order to make data-driven decisions. Lakeview has significant Burmese and African American populations. Surveys and focus groups for both populations were facilitated, helping us realize we had to find a systematic way to hear their voices on a regular basis.

We started by allocating funds for full-time African American and Burmese community liaisons. The goal was for these staff members to assist the district in better understanding the needs of the community and guide us in how we should respond. One of the needs both communities highlighted—which is also outlined in our strategic plan—is mental and behavioral health for students and families. This crucial need intersected with our implementation of a multitiered system of supports, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and restorative practices.



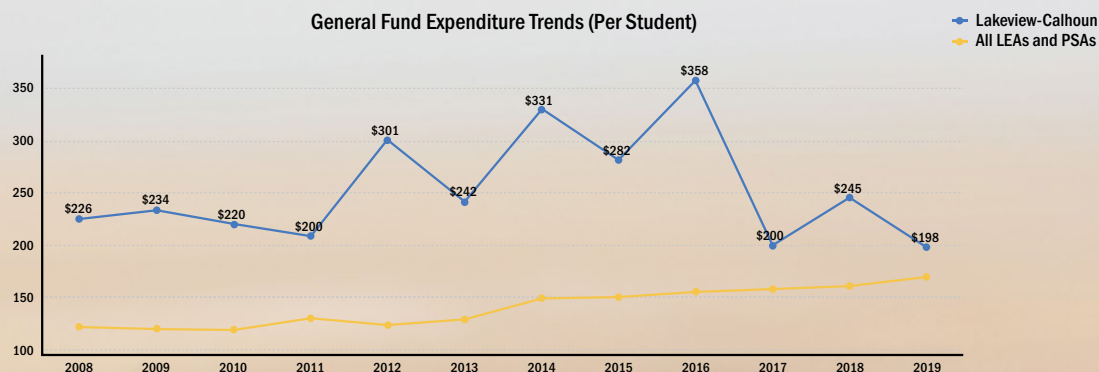
We knew that for these programs to be successful, they would require substantial resource allocation. We started with a plan of hiring a Director of Behavior Supports and a behavior interventionist for each building. The behavior interventionists primarily work with teachers to implement social-emotional and restorative best practices in their classrooms. They focus on tier one interventions in the classrooms, rather than waiting for the student to need further help. The district went from spending \$11 per student in 2014 to \$211 per student in 2019 for these services.

FIGURE 1.



To allocate funds for any new initiative, you typically have to take from another area. We looked through the budget to find where our spending perhaps didn't align with our current goals. One area we found was in technology. Although technology is important (especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic) we had to decide if keeping technology spending at its current rate was more important than the mental and emotional needs of the students. We decided to reorganize the technology department and have a less-aggressive computer replacement program. Also, we're hoping to pass a bond in the next year that will help cover a lot of these technology expenses. In Figure 2, you can see we went from spending \$358 per student in 2016 to \$198 per student in 2019.

FIGURE 2.



The Battle Creek Community Foundation saw our district's commitment to children's socioemotional health and offered to assist the effort by bringing Starr Commonwealth, Summit Pointe Community Mental Health and Grace Health to work with the district. The goal was to create a model for other districts to follow, with financial support from all the agencies. Starr Commonwealth is providing trauma training for district staff. They virtually trained all teachers, administrators, paraeducators and bus drivers during the shutdown last school year. Summit Pointe and Grace Health have embedded mental health counselors within the schools. Grace Health has also opened a health center at Lakeview High School. Among all of these agencies, there has been an overall investment of \$500,000 in students' socioemotional health.

This work supported the socioemotional health of all district students, but in looking through our district's equity lens, we knew our minority populations needed additional focus.

Lakeview started an African American Parent Network three years ago to help parents find a safe place to have a voice in the district. Historically, too many school districts perpetuate white privilege and the fallacy of colorblindness. Our African American parents needed this network to have a voice. It became apparent someone needed to be on staff to focus on this important work. And the district needed to demonstrate our commitment to it by hiring a staff member.

A community member who also happened to be a district parent stepped into the liaison role. This position reports directly to the superintendent to further highlight the importance of the work. We have also seen the community step up to support our African American students with their time and finances. Kellogg Community College and Western Michigan University School of Medicine created a medical internship pro-

gram for minority students in middle school, and our liaison organized and recruited for this program. Students who never thought they could be doctors suddenly were meeting with African American doctors and could see themselves in the medical field. Other professionals have stepped up to do the same, mentoring our African American students. This is just one of many ways this position has led to a more equitable school district for our African American students.

Our district has had a long-term relationship with the Burma Center to support our Burmese students and families. We realized our population had grown to a point that we weren't providing enough support. Parents weren't receiving translated communications, and other communications were not reaching the parents at all. That meant we weren't hearing complaints from the community, but that didn't mean there weren't any issues. It really meant we weren't keeping up our communications with the community.

We worked with the Burma Center to hire a full-time liaison who works side by side with our English Language Learner teachers and the district curriculum/instruction team. This was of great help when we moved to remote learning. We had to use different communication methods with our Burmese community. Our liaison helped us hold Zoom forums and communicate in areas where our Burmese community would be. Providing online sessions for the Burmese parents regarding how to use Google Classroom was a simple step that had great impact.

Budgets have a direct effect on the direction of a school district and how you choose to spend your funds can be influenced in various ways and by different factors. At Lakeview, we chose to make equity one of the primary lens in our decisionmaking. As we move into the recovery stage of addressing the academic impact of COVID-19, we

already know we need to allocate funds to aid in students' academic and emotional recovery in all of our diverse communities. We don't know what the next budget year will hold, but it's doubtful we will see funding source increases. As we move forward, Lakeview continues to use our strategic plan and the equity-focused changes we've implemented from the data and feedback we've received as our guide posts. While it will be challenging to address the academic and equity gaps COVID-19 is creating without additional funds, it will be up to our board of education and administration to decide where we will allocate our limited dollars for the greatest benefit to our students and community.

¹ Center for Public Education. *Educational Equity: What Does it Mean? How do we Know When we Reach it?* Retrieved from nsba.org/-/media/NSBA/File/cpe-educational-equity-research-brief-january-2016.pdf, Dec. 15, 2020.



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Governance Standards Establish Common Ground

By Michael Rochholz

As we begin this new year, I extend my congratulations to the newly elected and reelected school board members. I also offer well wishes to those school board members who were not up for election but continue to serve their school community with commitment and good intent.



There is so much learning required to serve as an effective school board member—from school finance and curriculum to infrastructure and legal issues. But what does it take to really impact student achievement? There is, after all, a correlation between the work of school boards and student achievement. But for the school board's impact on student achievement to be positive, service must be guided by principles that support excellent outcomes for students, reflecting research-based practices of effective school boards.

For those who have been school board members for some time, I am certain you have heard of the Board of Education Governance Standards published by MASB. These standards were created by school board members for school board members. Developing the governance standards could be regarded as the easy part—research has benchmarked the practices of effective school boards, and MASB had access to the perspective and experiences of literally thousands of school board members and superintendents. The more challenging part of developing those standards is the work that must occur at school board tables across the state, actively implementing the standards and holding ourselves and fellow board members accountable to them.

Eight guiding principles were identified within the standards: advocacy, civility, courage, empathy, inquiry, integrity, regard for authority of the board and selflessness. Take a moment to consider the meaning of each of these principles. I believe their intent and practice provides a vision of the success a school board can attain by operating in a respectful and effective manner. Is this how you see your school board operating? And, just as importantly, *is this how your community sees your school board operating?*

As board members, we must find ways to create an inclusive environment. When new board members arrive, they should not be viewed as “new board

members.” They are elected board members, regardless of their length of service. If we want to effectively execute the governance standards, we need to listen and respond to concerns and ideas from every board member. I, too, fell into the trap of referring to colleagues as “new board members.” It is incumbent upon us to use inclusive language. When we don't, it can create the perception of a lack of consideration of someone's ideas due to their limited board experience, setting up a divide at the table. And that could potentially lead to less-than-fruitful conversations and a lack of collaborative outcomes for the board as a whole.

I can remember times when community members would ask my opinion on a decision the board made. In keeping with the training I had, my response was that the board decided to go in the direction they chose based on the outcome of the vote, and I support the board's decision. That can be a hard statement to make sometimes. But if there is a desire for respect and integrity from all members of the board, those kinds of responses are what creates the environment for a highly effective board.

Every board of education is accountable to its school district community, and it holds the superintendent accountable for creating outcomes identified in the district's plan. Boards can ensure effective governance is taking place by establishing and committing to a vision for the district that emphasizes high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction. Boards that achieve this success work in cooperation with their superintendent and stakeholders. And, of course, the board of education should govern in a manner that is dignified and worthy of trust.

These practices may seem simple when you read them. But board members should ask themselves, “Do we have a district plan to guide us? Does my board govern in a dignified and trustworthy manner? How do outside stakeholders view us? Can we do better?”

Getting seven strong-willed and opinionated people working in the same direction can be challenging. I know that because I once was one of you. But we must come together in support of the authority of the board. As individuals, we do not hold any authority—only opinions and the power of persuasion. To be an effective governing body that has integrity and has earned the trust of the community, we must unite as a board and support board decisions.

As individual school board members, we should be motivated by and focus on what is in the best interest of all students. The individual school board member believes in the importance of and actively engages in lifelong learning. After all, we expect this from our students and our staff, don't we? Each school board member should also understand and respect both the authority and responsibilities of the board of education.

Understanding your role and responsibilities as a school board member is paramount to the success of the entire school board. Individual school board members should approach school governance work with a spirit of inquisitiveness. We must not predetermine or prejudice outcomes without receiving all of the information needed to carry out effective board work.

Our communities expect our individual school board members—and school boards as a whole—to be disciplined in their governance behaviors. And it is incumbent upon you to speak up when the performance of individuals or the board is not in alignment with the governance standards. This is the challenge we all must overcome if we are to do the right things for the children of our school communities.



Michael Rochholz

Michael is an MASB Consultant and former school board member, and can be reached at mrochholz@comcast.net.

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WHAT CAN GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DO FOR YOU?

By Jennifer Smith

As school board members, you are advocates for your district and public education. Your MASB Government Relations team is here to help you be the best advocate you can be, while also representing you at the Capitol.

Your Government Relations team uses input from the Government Relations Committee, MASB Resolutions, legislative priorities and feedback from all of you to advocate on legislation. The committee is made up of members from around the state. It monitors state and federal legislative and executive actions and school finance pertaining to public education and school districts. It considers current legislation and forms MASB's position on pending issues. If you are interested in becoming more involved in the legislative process, you can apply to be a member of the committee. The call for applications comes out in the spring.

While we are your voice at the Capitol, we need you to help amplify the message. We will reach out with information on pending legislation and ask you to contact your elected officials. Your contact makes the issue more personal; you can tell your representative and senator exactly how their actions and votes will affect their constituents. Tying a state legislative issue directly to its impact on the community is the most powerful form of advocacy.

MASB tries to make advocacy easy is through our e-Vocate system. At masb.org/evocate, you can sign up to receive the weekly *News From the Capitol* email, find out who your state and federally elected representatives are, keep track of key issues in the Legislature and respond to any legislative alerts. In addition to the state budget, there are hundreds of bills introduced each year that impact local districts and public education.

Your board can join with neighboring districts and take advantage of our free Grassroots Advocacy Program. Part of MASB's mission is to have our members actively engage and advocate as a governing body on behalf of their districts and as a voice for their students. This program encourages our members to engage on K-12 education legislation and actively advocate. Through the program, the Government Relations Team will help our members build their own regional grassroots coalitions and support those efforts. Bringing more voices to the table to positively advocate for students helps make you more successful in your advocacy efforts with both the legislature and the community.

Your Government Relations Team is eager to assist in your advocacy efforts. We are always available to answer a question, give updates on happenings in Lansing or help identify your elected officials. Simply contact us with your request at masbgov@masb.org or 517.327.5900. We believe it's important for school board members to make every effort to affect the legislative process for the benefit of local districts and education in general. It's important to be an advocate.



Jennifer Smith

Jennifer is MASB's Director of Government Relations, and can be reached at jsmith@masb.org or 517.327.5912.

Was this article helpful to you?





NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

By Verjeana McCotter-Jacobs, Esq.

Equity is a core mission of the National School Boards Association. As school leaders, we recognize that to address a problem, we first must name it. In 2017, the NSBA Board of Directors adopted the following definition of equity:

“We affirm in our actions that each student can, will and shall learn. We recognize that based on factors including but not limited to disability, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, students are often deprived of equitable educational opportunities. Educational equity is the intentional allocation of resources, instruction and opportunities according to need, requiring that discriminatory practices, prejudices and beliefs be identified and eradicated.”

The Equity and Member Services group was created to bring information, training and other services to NSBA’s federation of 49 state associations and the U.S. territory of the Virgin Islands, representing more than 90,000 school board officials across the U.S. The goal was to increase awareness of equity issues among state associations and school leaders.

NSBA hosts an Equity Symposium each year, gathering school leaders to learn more about these topics and offer solutions and best practices. The next Equity Symposium will be held Feb. 10, 2021; it will be online and registration is free. More information is available at NSBA’s website, nsba.org/Events/Equity-Symposium.

In addition to the Equity Symposium, we provide support for equity training and issues at different levels within state associations and to local districts through their state associations. Topics include training in governance accountability around equity, implicit bias, the importance of diversifying the workforce, trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning and school safety.

As our schools and our country responded to acts of systemic racism in the summer of 2020, we understood that now was the moment to push harder. NSBA launched the Dismantling Institutional Racism in Education initiative to assist state school board associations and other education leaders in addressing racial inequities.

Much of the racial unrest this summer was politicized. However, educational equity is not about politics or political ideology. Racial disparities hurt children—that is true regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum.

DIRE acknowledges that institutional, structural and systemic racism have been engrained in the history of America and throughout its public education system. It is dedicated to understanding and recognizing the root causes of barriers to equitable educational outcomes for each child.

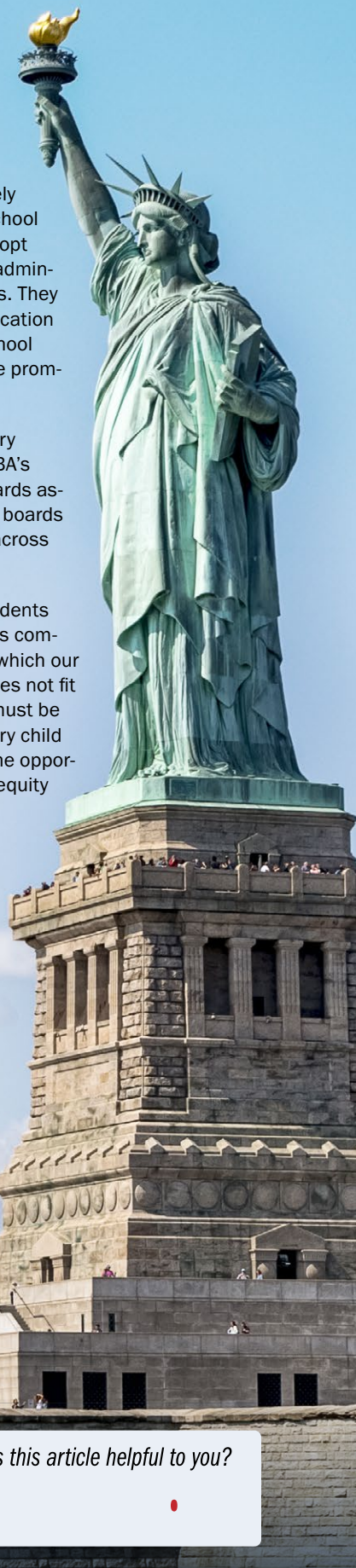
The nation’s school boards are uniquely positioned to accomplish this task. School boards set goals, approve policies, adopt curriculum, set budgets and oversee administrative aspects for their local schools. They also serve as a direct line of communication from the community to the school. School boards are responsible for fulfilling the promise of public education.

DIRE is governed by a National Advisory Steering Committee composed of NSBA’s equity council chairs, state school boards association presidents and state school boards association executive directors from across the country.

While we appreciate that needs of students may vary in different states and across communities, there is one constant upon which our equity work will be based: One size does not fit all. That means boards of education must be vigilant in their role to ensure that every child for whom they work has access and the opportunity to be successful. This is where equity becomes a part of our reality.

In 2021, DIRE will drive equity awareness and understanding, creating tools for our members. In turn, our members will use those tools to tailor training for their school district members.

More change is coming. As NSBA’s new Chief Transformation Officer, I am taking a lead role in executing the organization’s transformation around member engagement and building upon the progress in member services and equity. It’s work we all must do together, at the national, state and local levels. Our society is waiting for us, and our children are running out of time.



Verjeana McCotter-Jacobs, Esq.

Verjeana is NSBA’s Chief Transformation Officer, and can be reached at vjacobs@nsba.org.

Was this article helpful to you?



EVENTS CALENDAR

★ GREAT FOR NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBERS

★ FEB. 10, 2021

MASB New Board Member Series
Webinar: Roles, Responsibilities and
Governance Standards

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

FEB. 10, 2021

NSBA Equity Online Symposium

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

★ FEB. 19 – 21, 2021

MASB Winter Institute Featuring Board
Member Certification (CBA) Classes
and Board President Workshops

VIRTUAL WEBINARS

FEB. 23, 2021

MASB Member Matters Webinar

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

MARCH 1, 2021

CBA 287: How to Survive Budget
Shortfalls

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

★ MARCH 10, 2021

MASB New Board Member Series
Webinar: School Finance Overview

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

★ MARCH 20, 2021

CBA 101: Fundamentals of School
Board Service

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

MARCH 23, 2021

MASB Member Matters Webinar

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

★ MARCH 24 – 25, 2021

CBA 101: Fundamentals of School
Board Service

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

★ APRIL 5, 2021

CBA 214: Open Meetings Act

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

APRIL 8 – 10, 2021

NSBA 2021 Online Experience

VIRTUAL WEBINARS

★ APRIL 14, 2021

MASB New Board Member Series
Webinar: Dos and Don'ts of the Open
Meetings Act

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

APRIL 20, 2021

MASB Member Matters Webinar

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

★ MAY 3, 2021

CBA 223: Parliamentary Procedure

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

★ MAY 12, 2021

MASB New Board Member Series
Webinar: You Are Under the
Microscope

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

MAY 18, 2021

MASB Member Matters Webinar

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

JUNE 2021

NSBA Advocacy Institute

VIRTUAL WEBINARS

★ JUNE 9, 2021

MASB New Board Member Series
Webinar: CBA Program and Board
Development

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

JUNE 15, 2021

MASB Member Matters Webinar

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

★ NOV. 11 – 14, 2021

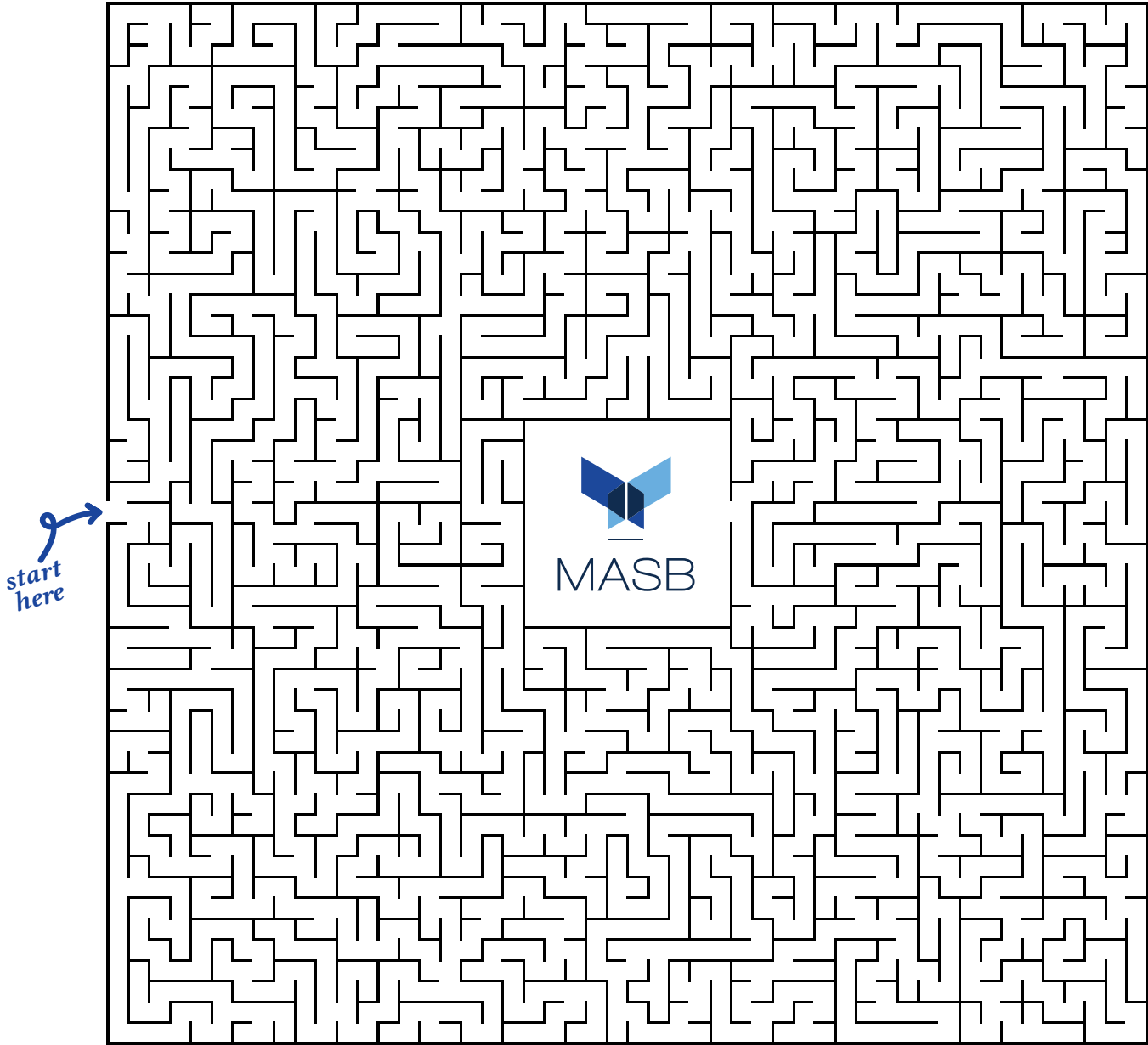
Annual Leadership Conference and
Exhibit Show

AMWAY GRAND AND DEVOS PLACE,
GRAND RAPIDS

For more information about these events, visit the MASB website, masb.org/calendar, or call 517.327.5900.

MASB MAZE

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