

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
Millburn Public Schools

INFORMATION ITEM

May 2, 2011

To: Board of Education Members

From: Ellen E. Mauer, PhD

Subject: Request for Training-Follow Up

History of Request

I have received a request for some training for BOE members on the following proposed topics:

1. IASB and in house training courses
2. magazine subscriptions and books
3. attending district and school events
4. visiting our school classrooms
5. attending school activities
6. visiting district related organizations such as Millburn Educational Foundations and PTOs
7. visiting SEDOL and other organizations that interface with our district
8. discussing COW and standard board meetings room layout and format
9. discussing how COW and standard board meetings should be conducted
10. discussing forming subcommittees
11. discussing expectations for board members
12. discussing priorities and projects
13. discussing board and district objectives and constraints
14. discussing community perceptions of the board and how to address those concerns
15. discussing how to earn community trust in the board
16. discussing how to work more effectively as a board than as 7 individual board members

I have spoken with Barb Toney of IASB. She feels we can get this list completed by doing two things: 1-a BOE self-reflection and 2-a Starting Right workshop. She can tailor these specifically to the above topics and include other information. IASB charges \$400 for the self-reflection and \$600 for the Starting Right piece with modifications. She also feels it is important to have the information from Community Engagement Day for the second workshop. She also feels it will be important to have Jason in attendance.

Barb's availability at this time is Tuesday, May 31; Wednesday, June 1; and Saturday, July 16. She will need about 3 hours each time so you could start early on a weeknight, perhaps 5:30 or 6 PM so that you aren't out so late. Other dates may open up from her as she hears from other BOEs who have asked her to save tentative dates.

I would suggest that the BOE have a discussion as to how they want to do these trainings and set some dates based upon the availability of everyone. Let's make sure we have our calendars with us as we have this discussion.

Starting Right: Board-building for the new Governance Team

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

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

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

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

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

Benefits of a "Starting Right" workshop include:

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

How do we get off to a good start?

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

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

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

Contact your Field Services Director today!

Springfield Office 217/528-9688 • Lombard Office 630/629-3776

For more information, please contact your field services director today!

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ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

School Board Self-Evaluation

Working together ... better



What is a school board self-evaluation?

A school board self-evaluation is a key step on the road to governance excellence. Every board wants to provide quality leadership for the district. A fundamental part of quality is regularly assessing how the board is doing – in both its work and processes.

The best school boards recognize that in order for them to be effective, they need to take responsibility for their work and processes. When boards and board members develop a strong commitment to continuously evaluate and improve their practices and procedures, they are able to provide creative, decisive leadership for their district. IASB is available to help member boards meet this important challenge.

An IASB facilitated board self-evaluation is not an attempt by an outsider to evaluate the board, nor is it an exercise in blame fixing or finger pointing. The board self-evaluation is a means by which a board, as a governance team, steps back and looks at itself, critically examines its strengths and weaknesses, and makes plans for continuous improvement.

What are the purposes of a self-evaluation?

A board self-evaluation serves many purposes including:

- Gathering the perceptions of all board members,
- Fostering dialogue,
- Improving the Board's understanding of its role and decision-making processes,
- Identifying next steps for board learning and growth, and
- Ensuring continuous board improvement.

Will our school board benefit from a self-evaluation?

Every board can benefit from a self-evaluation. Benefits include:

- Improved communication and relationships,
- Agreement about roles and responsibilities,
- Successful board meetings,
- Better board-superintendent teamwork, and
- More effective leadership for the district.

What do board members say about an IASB facilitated board self-evaluation?

Quotes from actual meeting evaluations:

Good chance to build some teamwork.

Allowed everyone to express their thoughts on the make up of the board.

Having aired some past baggage, hopefully now we can move forward.

Open discussion among board members, with helpful facilitation.

Agreeing to do things differently – “rules of engagement.” (we were in a rut of repeating the same patterns over and over).

More tolerance and willingness to allow for difference of opinion.

The board now has a common language about how the Board conducts the business of the Board.

The mission of the Illinois Association of School Boards is excellence in local school governance and support of public education.

How do we get started? It's as easy as 1, 2, 3 ...

1. Contact your IASB field services director to discuss goals, process and timelines. Our staff will make every effort to meet the specific needs of your board. The process usually begins with establishing a date for the in-district session. A dedicated meeting of 2 1/2 to 3 hours seems best.
2. The board, generally through the superintendent and board president, and IASB discuss and select the best format for the meeting. Among the options available are two proven board self-evaluation instruments. Both are available online. Most boards find the online format to be convenient, efficient and easy.
3. Board members individually complete the survey provided by IASB (either online or on paper) and submit to IASB. The field services director prepares a report for the board. This report is used to facilitate the board's conversation at the meeting.

The Illinois Open Meetings Act allows boards to meet in closed session for the purpose of self-evaluation “when meeting with a representative of a statewide association of which the board is a member.” 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(16). The board can choose whether to meet in closed or open session.

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

IASB recommends boards participate in some form of board self-evaluation annually. The self-evaluation process can help the board to strengthen things it already does well or address areas of challenge. With continuous improvement in mind, some boards appreciate the opportunity to establish a base-line set of performance data and watch progress over the years.