Serving on your local school board
A foundation for success

Wayne Gibson, Board President, Eldorado School District
2016 New Board Member Institute
about ASBA

- a private, nonprofit, membership organization
- provides leadership, training, advocacy and specialized services to AR school boards
- promotes community volunteer governance of public education and continuous improvement of student success.

- open to boards of school districts & charter schools and educational service co-operatives. Businesses may apply as commercial affiliates

- Board of Directors represents 14 regional districts across the state
- represents 1400+ board members, 246 districts, and all of the children in these districts
- an affiliate of the NSBA
Assessing Your Readiness
Do you have what it takes?

Reflect on your answers to the following questions.
Do you have what it takes?

Do you have a **vision** and **goals** for high academic achievement for all students?
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Will you actively work to inspire parents and other stakeholders to have confidence in the local public schools?
Do you have what it takes?

Do you understand your focus will be on “the big picture” …

and not day-to-day operations of the district?
Do you have what it takes?

Are you committed to focusing on a broad range of district concerns, rather than a single issue?
Do you have what it takes?

Are you good at working collaboratively to get things done?
Do you have what it takes?

Are you committed to doing what’s right for **ALL children**, even in the face of opposition?
objectives for this session

Provide an introduction to:

• school board member duties and responsibilities

• recommended best practices in your role as part of the district’s governance team

• some of the legal and ethical aspects of board work
Why these things matter for you

Your local school board makes decisions that...

- Affect virtually every important aspect of the local schools
- Determine how your community’s children are educated
- Support teaching and learning, and ensure student achievement
- Determine how tax dollars are spent
why school boards matter

The behavior and attitude of board members affect the reputation of the entire school system.

Your board’s decisions impact:

- Children and their parents
- The livelihood of school system employees
- The economic well-being of the community and the quality of life in its neighborhoods
The rewards of school board service

• Working to continually improve schools and student learning
• Building a better future for our kids, our communities and our state
• Strengthening our democracy through an educated citizenry
Board Legal Authority / Chain of Command

State & Federal Rules & Regulations

School Board

Adopts Policies/Hires & Evaluates Superintendent

Superintendent

Staff
The governance team

- School board members and the superintendent make up the governance team
- Board-superintendent relations are the key to a successful district
- Understand and respect each other’s roles
The governance role of school boards

• School boards (NOT individual members) are “governors” of the district, acting on behalf of the people in their community

• For all school boards, the bottom line is student achievement
the governance team

A successful board-superintendent partnership is built on trust and mutual respect

✓ Frequent two-way communication
✓ No surprises!
✓ Well-defined roles
✓ Professional growth
✓ Regular evaluations
Team Member Roles

BOARD

Role is to **Govern**
- Hires and may fire the superintendent
- Sets direction and policy
- Monitors progress toward set goals

**Accountable to the community**

SUPERINTENDENT

Role is to **Manage**
- Oversees the day-to-day operations of the district
- Implements policies and goals set by the board

**Accountable to the board**
Team Member Roles

Duties & Obligations:

✓ Familiar with state laws, regulations, policies, & District policies, rules & regulations
✓ Knowledge of educational aims/objectives
✓ Work harmoniously
✓ Vote & act impartially for district good
✓ Accept the will of majority vote & give wholehearted support
✓ Accept responsibility for confidentiality
✓ Represent Board & District to the public
✓ Refer complaints & refrain from individual counsel or action
Team Member Roles

School Boards GOVERN

Decide WHAT
Set vision, mission, goals
Approve, monitor & review budget
Evaluate budget progress results
Request information
Consider issues
Adopt policy
Approve & review plans

Superintendents MANAGE

Decide HOW
Manage in alignment with these
Recommend budget priorities & prepare budget for approval
Monitor & report-out on goal progress
Seek/provide information
Provide recommendations
Recommend/carry out policy
Implement plans
## Team Member Roles

### School Boards GOVERN
- Approve staff recommendation & approve dismissal
- Evaluate the superintendent
- Approve evaluation criteria & procedures
- Delegate day-to-day operations to the superintendent
- Approve construction projects
- Approve public engagement plan
- Represent public interests

### Superintendents MANAGE
- Recommend all staff for approval or dismissal
- Ensure the evaluation of all staff
- Supervise/evaluate personnel
- Manage or assign all operational aspects of the district
- Make building & facility construction / renovation recommendation
- Implement strategies to involve parents/community members and create partnerships
- Act in public interest
ACTIVITY

The role of the board

Sometimes a school board member or a superintendent may choose not to “stay in their lane” when it comes to appropriate role boundaries.

Turn to someone next to you and discuss possible problems this might cause and how/why crossing the line can influence your team’s/district’s success.

Report to the group.
The Governance Role of
Arkansas School Boards

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Your Top Ten Statutory Duties
*top ten statutory duties*

**Duty 1.**

Attend their board’s meetings, including the regular monthly meeting and any special meetings.

Legally convened board meetings are the ONLY time you can conduct business.

Business can’t be conducted unless there’s a quorum.

All meetings have announcement requirements.
Duty 2. Determine the mission and direction of the school district.

The board works with the superintendent to identify the overall vision and mission and plans for reaching these.

The process and outcome of “strategic planning” become the “road map” for the district.

The board uses the vision to drive planning, decision-making and evaluation of district operations and progress.
Duty 3. Follow all the state and federal laws that govern public schools.

So many laws govern schools that board members can’t know them all.

Part of the superintendent’s job is to keep the board posted on Arkansas Department of Education requirements affecting the district.

Some districts use the services of attorneys to advise them. ASBA has two attorneys on staff that may advise.
Duty 4. Make, enforce, and obey school district policies.

Policy making is a serious board responsibility, because board policies ultimately affect just about every aspect of the school district.

The board MUST ALWAYS follow its own policies.
Duty 5. Employ a superintendent of schools to oversee the day-to-day operations of the school district.

The district’s superintendent is the only district employee the board has to power to directly hire or dismiss.

THIS IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS MAKE!
Duty 6. Employ staff and conduct hearings.

In hiring, the board’s role is to make an offer to provide employment to individuals based on recommendations made by the superintendent.

In hearings, the board serves as the finder-of-fact:

✓ for employee termination recommendations
✓ when employee grievances are not satisfactorily resolved through administrative action
✓ when students are recommended for expulsion
Duty 7. Evaluate the superintendent annually or at least before extending his or her contract.

The board should be clear with its superintendent about:
- what it expects from him/her
- what the expectation will look like when completed
- how his/her performance will be measured

The superintendent should receive regular feedback regarding his/her job performance.
Duty 8. Oversee school district finances and all aspects of the budget, never permitting the district to end the fiscal year with a negative balance.

The superintendent and his/her staff develop and manage a realistic, balanced budget.

The board approves the budget and financial reports.

“Legislative audit” training is required for all board members.
Duty 9. Visit district schools and classrooms, when students are present, at least annually and also attend some events and functions.

The purpose for visits is to gain a sense of the facility, the students, and the people who work there.

Visits aren’t meant to be a white-glove inspection tour or an opportunity to roam, snoop, collect evidence, give directives, or “take names.”
top ten statutory duties

Duty 10. Take the training and professional development necessary to serve as active, informed members of the school board.

Newly elected members must earn 9 hours by December 31 of the year following their election.

Six hours of training are required each year afterwards.

Board members can never have TOO MUCH TRAINING!
Remember:

✓ Individual school board members have no legal authority

✓ Authority is exercised only by a majority of the board
School board meetings: Legal requirements

• School boards must hold a regular meeting at least once a month while school is in session
  ✓ Posted on Website > 10 days prior

• If special/called/work session meetings are held, adequate notice must be given to board members and the local media
  ✓ > 24 hours prior
A quorum (a majority of members) is needed to hold a meeting

Accurate minutes must be kept of regular and special meetings

Executive (“closed”) sessions may be held to discuss certain subjects
executive sessions are allowed ONLY to:

- Consider the employment, appointment, promotion, demotion or resignation of an employee (never for “blanket” hiring)
- Evaluate the superintendent
legal requirements for school board meetings

- Sensitive, controversial or uncomfortable subjects are not a justification for executive session.
• When legal issues arise, consult an attorney.

• ASBA can provide some assistance, but does not act as legal counsel for school districts.
frequently asked questions

- Will I be paid?
- Do I have to report my personal finances to the ADE?
- Am I personally liable for decisions I make on the school board?
Legal Basis for Arkansas School Boards

✔ Arkansas Statutes give certain powers to the school board as a body.

✔ A.C.A. 6-13-620 outlines statutory duties of school boards.

✔ No authority is given to individual board members by statute.

✔ A board’s power is through majority votes at the board table.
In the Board Room

✓ Use discussion at the board table to build support for decisions.
✓ Make all decisions in an open meeting in accordance with Arkansas’ Open Meeting Law.
In the Board Room

✔ Once a decision is made, it is important for all parties to support it.

✔ Whenever possible, speak with “one voice” on key decisions.
Outside the Board Room

Power and authority of...

Board Members
- No official power
- Can be a great ambassador or undermine decisions

Superintendent
- Significant – needs to run the district
Common-sense conduct tips for board members

✓ Attend all board meeting & stay informed
✓ Listen to others but use independent judgment
✓ Be objective, keep an open mind
✓ Use fact-based decision making
✓ Don’t compromise the district
✓ Avoid conflicts of interest
✓ Keep your promises
✓ Use the chain of command
Don’t forget to have a good work ethic

- Do your homework before meetings.
- Do your best to attend every board meeting.
- Share your thoughts before the decision is made.
- Stay current on local, state, and federal education issues.
- Participate in training.
Now that you’ve heard…

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Our Mission

“The mission of ASBA is to promote student focused leadership in public education through training, advocacy and service for local board members.”
Thank you for serving and for being here today!