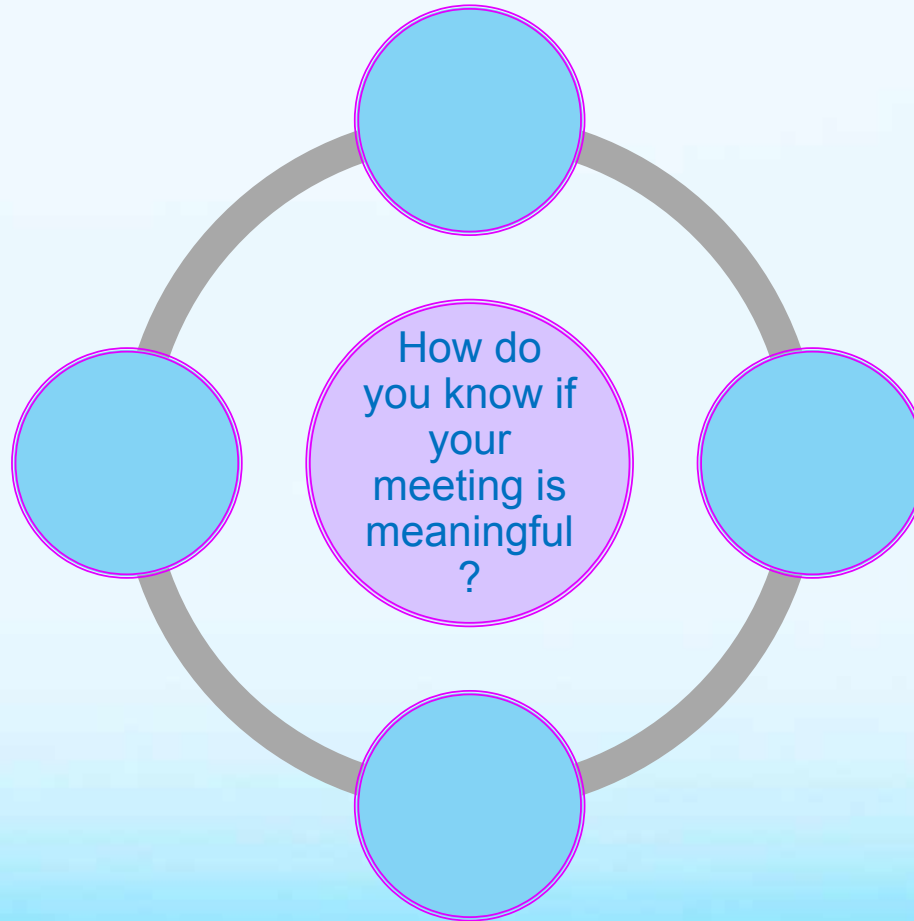


MEANINGFUL MEETINGS: More than Just Going Through the Motions

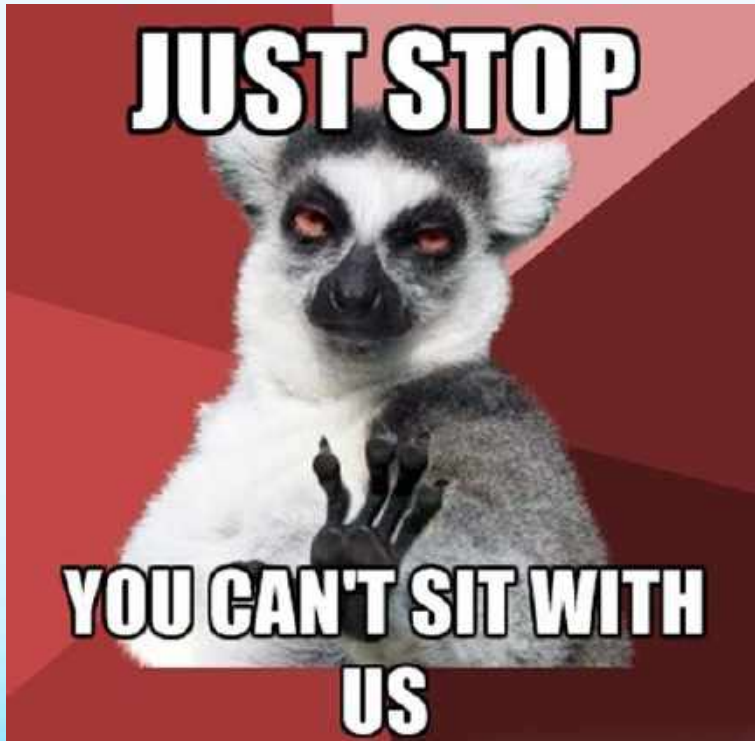
Tiffany Jackson and Timi C. Tullis
Leadership Fly-In
Feb 2022

Why Do Meetings Matter



We Begin with Some Questions

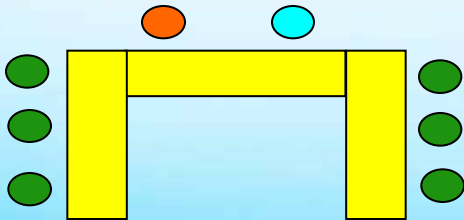
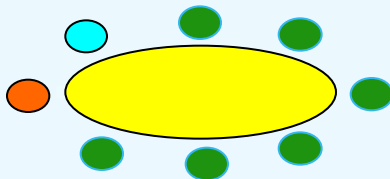
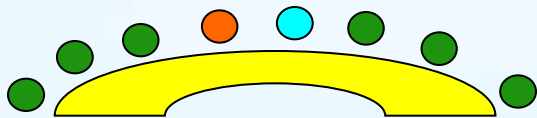
Where does the Superintendent sit at meetings?



- a) Next to the Board chair
- b) With the Board, but at the end of the table
- c) In the audience
- d) Superintendent?

We Begin with Some Questions

How are board members seated at meetings?



- a) Randomly dispersed
- b) By seniority
- c) By political party
- d) We're just happy Board members show up for meetings

We Begin with Some Questions

**How does the Board address
public participation at the meetings?**

- a) One opportunity for public comment during meeting
- b) Two opportunities for public comment during meeting
- c) Public comment throughout the meeting
- d) Board members enjoy debating the public during the meeting

We Begin with Some Questions

**How would you describe
your Board's discussion of issues?**

- a) Thoughtful discussion and exploration of issues leading to consensus
- b) Vigorous back and forth of competing viewpoints
- c) No holds-barred battle for superiority and control
- d) A lot of yelling and name calling over the incessant banging of a gavel

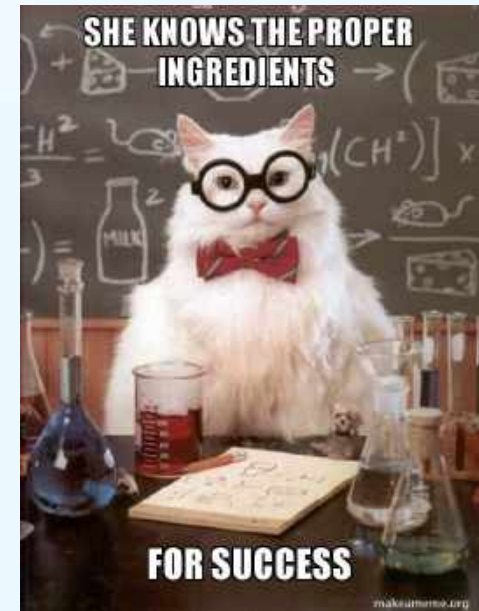
Presidents' Meeting Preparation Checklist

- Check with board members
- Examine agenda for items that are not board responsibilities
- List administrative items as reports
- Estimate time requirements
- Place important items early
- Place public interest items early
- Place student presentations early
- Review final agenda
- Agree to avoid surprises



Ingredients for a Successful Meeting

- Focus on board work
- Effective participation by each board member
- Effective leadership by the board chair
- Efficient procedures were used for routine business
- Well understood rules of order
 - Roberts Rules if they're adopted by your board
- Good recording of the minutes and policies
- A mutually supportive relationship with the superintendent
- Policies were used to answer questions
- Public participation was orderly, and democratic



After Each Meeting

- **Ensure actions to the public**
- **Ensure actions to the staff**
- **Ensure that board actions are implemented**
- **Ensure that minutes are recorded and distributed**
- **Ensure requested items are scheduled for a future meeting**
- **Plan for the next meeting**

The Importance of Board Meetings

- Where and when the work of the Board is done
- Distinguish between leadership and control
- **Failure to focus on how Board meetings are conducted is to risk becoming, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, destructive**



The Work of Board Meetings

- Elect Board Officers
- Debate and Approve Motions
- Hear Public Opinion and Grievances
- Opportunity for Board Member Statements
- Make Governance Decisions





.... ALL UNDER THE PUBLIC EYE!

The *REAL* Work of Board Meetings

- Model Desired Behaviors
- Communicate Board Values and Vision
- Focus Primary Work of District
- Create a Board and District Culture
- Strategic Goals
- Making Governance Decisions



Follow Rules and Effective Facilitation

- Give all members equal voice
- Encourage participation
- Discourage monopolizing
- Keep discussion focused
- Stop personal attacks
 - Debate the issue, not the member
- Suggest options
- Summarize and bring closure



Model Desired Behaviors

**Board meetings should be an example of the
desired ideal of “professional practice”
within the School District**

What are some examples of “professional practice”?

Ensure that Board Actions are Understood

- Repeat each motion in full before voting
- Call for both affirmative and negative votes
- Announce the result for the secretary
- Summarize decisions and expected actions at the end of the meeting



Available Tools

- Materials available to the public
- Post-meeting evaluation or survey
- Board evaluation documents



Model Desired Behaviors

Self-evaluation Questions

- Does the Board set aside time to discuss and evaluate its meeting behaviors?
- Has the Board made efforts to ascertain how their meetings appear to those in attendance?
- Does the Board regularly examine its structure and meeting format, or is it “the way it’s always been done?”

Focus Work of District



- Meeting time spent on matters should reflect their relative importance to district improvement.
- Make sure that Board members and staff share an agreed upon definition of “success”.
- Match the work of Board meetings to district’s vision and mission.

Focus Work of District

Suggestions

Align agenda items to Board Strategic Plan Goals and initiatives of the district

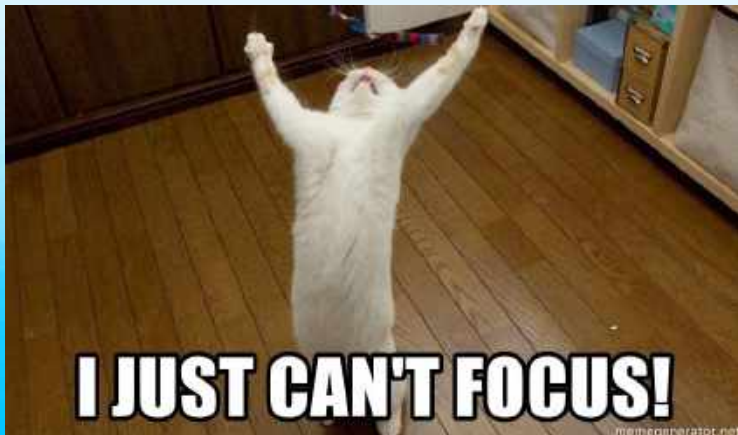
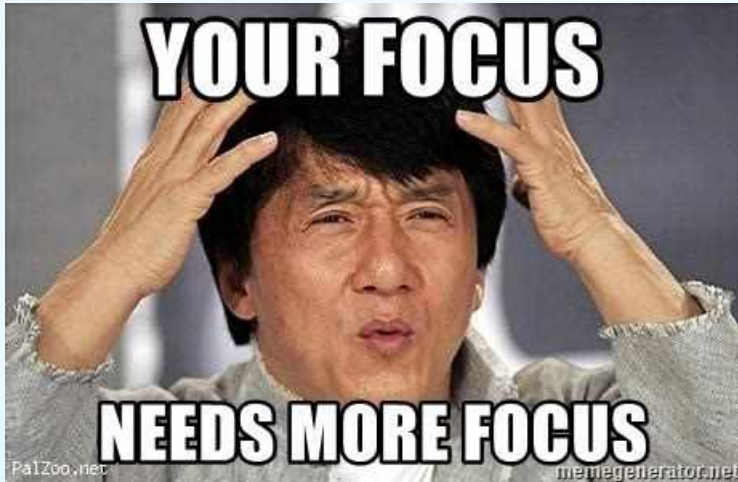
Board committee structure tied to Goals instead of Tasks



Focus Work of District

Available Tools

- Board agenda
- Board committee structure and assignments
- Board governance goals



Focus Work of District

Self-evaluation Questions

- What are the Board meetings about?
- What is the percentage of Board meeting time is spent on student achievement?
- During presentations to the Board, do member questions distract from or focus the conversation?
- Do all in attendance leave meetings with the same understanding of the meeting? How do you know?

Communicate Board Values

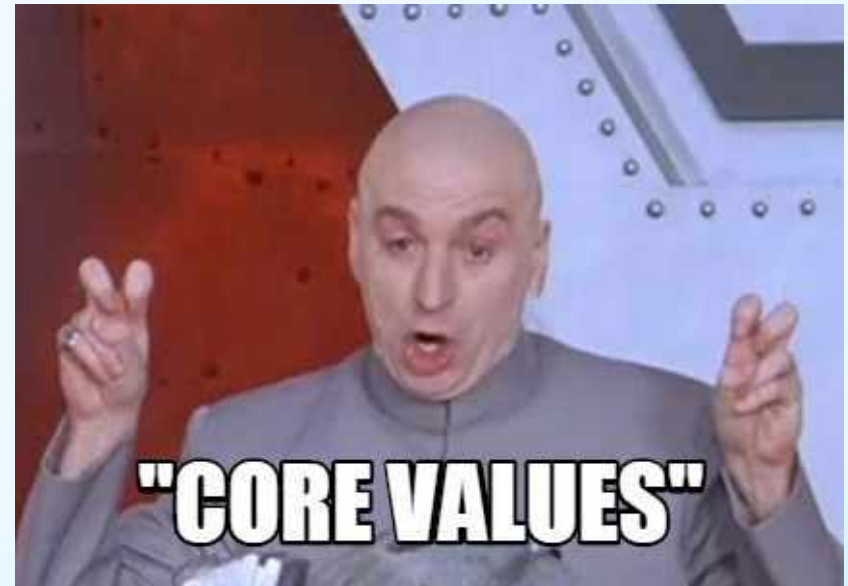


Board meetings should reflect an agreed-upon understanding of the Board's work and what a high quality meeting looks like.

Communicate Board Values

Some Suggestions

- Be conscious of layout and appearance of Board meeting room.
- Board mission statement and goals displayed during Board meetings.



Communicate Board Values



Available Tools

- “Public friendly” materials and information available to public
- Copies of Board mission statement and goals available at every meeting

Communicate Board Values

Self-evaluation Questions

- How are Board values communicated throughout the Board meeting?
- If a visitor from another community was to attend a Board meeting, what would their impression be of the Board/district values?
- Has the Board considered its meetings from the perspective of the audience?

Create a Common Culture

Some Suggestions

- A portion of yearly Board Self-evaluation process should focus on Board meetings
- Invest time and energy on Board member orientation
- Insist on Board member professional development
- Have and stick to a yearly calendar to assure all necessary work is accomplished



Create a Common Culture

Available Tools



- Board self-evaluation document and process (include administrators)
- Board retreat
- Board member orientation materials
- Professional development calendar
- Board Member Handbook

Create a Common Culture

Self-evaluation Questions

- What are the Board's expectations concerning member professional development? How are they enforced?
- What professional development opportunities does the Board create for members?
- What is the Board's orientation process for new members?

Power of Planning

Board meetings should be bound together by a common, consistent thread; each meeting linked to past and future meetings, always focused on the Board's vision

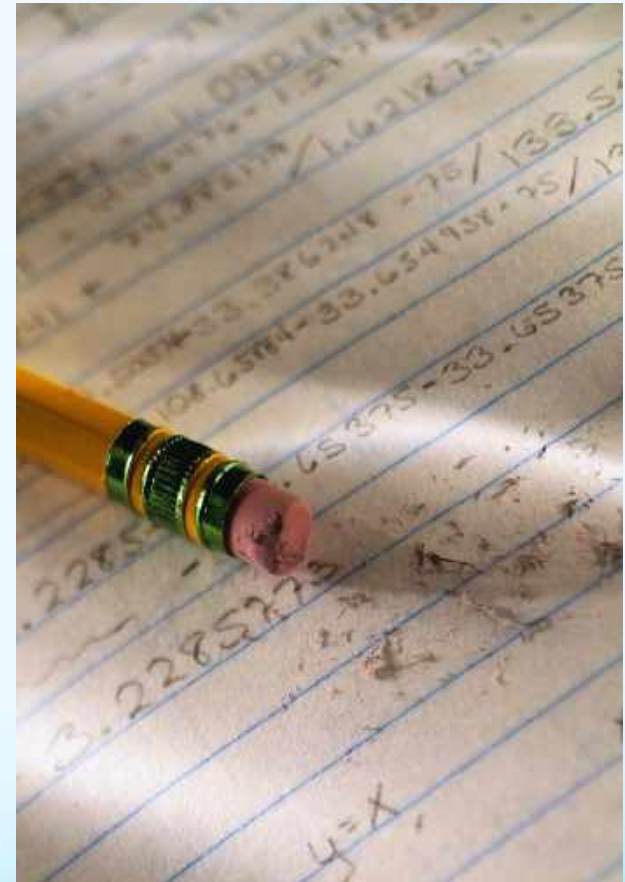
- Board meetings should not be scripted, but they should be planned
- Consider plotting out meetings for the school year, focusing on the yearly calendar of events
- Plan Board meetings in accordance with governance goals, tying to past and future meetings

Indicators of an Effective Board Meeting

- Purpose is clear
- Not held unless necessary
- Clear, concise supporting information is available
- Background information is delivered in advance
- Board decisions dominate agenda
- Members have read material
- Discussion is thorough and concise
- Final decision is clear to all
- All are treated with respect
- Purpose is accomplished



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...



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Special thanks to:

Gary R. Brochu,
Hartford, Connecticut School Board Member
for sharing his material

