Assessing Yourself as a Board Member

Association of Alaska School Boards
63rd Annual Conference
The Importance of Locally Elected Boards
Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

...because Elected Boards matter to democracy.
“As we have said before, local school boards are the **crucible of democracy**. Local school elections in America provide the closest example of democracy for the American people.”

Laurence Iannaccone/Frank Lutz, 2008
Professors Emeritus,
Univ. of California/Texas A & M
Democratic board theorists, 1959
Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

...because Elected Boards matter to student performance.
Boards in high achieving districts were consistently different from boards in low achieving districts:

- They held differing Beliefs

High Achieving district boards believe in...........

- Constant Quest for personal and system improvement

(Delagardelle, 2001–2016)
Shelton—Focus on Activities to Increase Student Achievement

- Elevating Board Activities
- Elevating Superintendent Activities
- Student Achievement Increases
“..(national) systems that grant more autonomy to (school districts) to define and elaborate their curriculum and assessments perform better than systems that don’t..”

“there is a positive correlation in school (district) autonomy for resource allocation and improved student performance”

*Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education – PISA Report 2012*
Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

......because Elected Boards are under attack.
“God made the Idiot for practice….

…and then he made the school board.”

Mark Twain, 1897
Texas bill would establish a process to allow voters to recall individual trustees if the state lowers a school district’s academic or financial rating from one year to the next.

April 18, 2015
Texas, HB 1327
Wave of the Future?

“The more uncomfortable I can make it (for trustees), the better the idea “

Texas House Education Chairman, 2015
Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

...because Elected Boards can be replaced.
Eli Broad: The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems

“mayoral control of school boards or . . . no school board at all.”

–Eli Broad (address, National Governors Association Education Policy Advisors Institute, Marina del Rey, CA, April 4, 2003)
Mayoral Controlled Board’s in Decline

1990: 40 DISTRICTS

2013: 11 DISTRICTS

2016: 8 DISTRICTS

Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

...because Elected Boards need balanced governance.
“Unfortunately, the boards ....tend to be populated with well-meaning supporters ....who often lack any business background.......”
The Perfect Board

What board member occupation mix would create the best school board?

A majority of ........ Educators?

Business persons?

Professionals?

Labor & Homemakers?

Retired?
**Board Member Occupations**

Majority Businessperson = Less Effective Board
Majority Educators = Less Effective Board

Balance of all Occupational Backgrounds = Most Effective Board

Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

......because Elected Boards can be seen as dysfunctional.
“The local school board, especially the elected kind, is an anachronism and an outrage....”

“We can no longer pretend it’s working well.....”

“We need to.....put this dysfunctional arrangement out of its misery....”

Chester E. Finn Jr., President,
Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2014
Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

......because Elected Boards can become dysfunctional.
Ineffective governance is often the byproduct of what has been called "school board dysfunction,"

–Education Week, March 2015, John Mannes
Balanced Governance™

Governance Continuum

- Disengaged
- Balanced Governance
- Over- Reaching

- Outcomes– Ends
- Balanced Governance
- Processes– Means
Governance Models Continuum

- Disengaged Board
  - Integrated Governance (Wong & Shen)
  - Democratic Governance (Hill)
- Balanced Governance (Alsbury)
  - Policy Governance (Carver/Broad)
  - Coherent Governance (Quinn & Dawson)
- Over-Reaching Board
  - Lighthouse Governance (Delagardelle)
Why is Self Assessment Necessary?

......because Elected Boards can become unbalanced.
Unbalanced Boards (Alsbury, 2008)

Frequent Politically–Contentious Board turnover

Frequent Superintendent turnover

Student achievement decline
Unbalanced Boards Can Hurt Schools

- Board and superintendent tenure is declining (Glass, 2009)
  - Loss of organizational memory
  - Loss of board training by experienced members

- Indirect but significant influence (Glass, 2007)
  - Decline of staff morale/security
  - Discontinuity of goals/purpose
  - Declining community confidence in schools
  - Personnel instability & Lack of confidence
What can cause school boards to become unbalanced?

“While a Board member independently calls the shots in the campaign, the job itself demands collaboration.”

Education Week, March 2015,
John Mannes
Dealing with the UnBalanced Board

The Disconnected Board Member
The Unbalanced Continuum

- Are disconnected board members.......

Disgruntled
or
Rogue?
Disgruntled vs. Rogue Board Members

- **Disgruntled** members usually recover from whatever is causing their discomfort; they move on for the greater good of the board and the school corporation.

- **Rogue** members are preoccupied with one-upmanship and/or getting even. With rogue members, it is seldom about right or wrong, rather, it is about winning at all costs.
Disgruntled Member Solutions

Evaluation

- Annual board self-assessment
- External evaluation
- Required orientation training for candidates and new board members
- Formative board observation and evaluation

All need to include the Balanced Governance individual board member characteristics.
Disgruntled Member Solutions

Relationship Development
- Opportunities for social dialogue/relationship building...done through frequent, embedded conversations in work meetings.
- Embed relationship building opportunities in orientation training.
- Channel energies of the board member into special projects.
- Personal intervention

Policy Solutions
- Craft and follow the Balanced Governance Progressive Response policy
Rogue Board Member Solution: 3 C’s

Goal: Minimize influence & survive the term of office

- Compact (Operating procedures/Board authority)
  - Specific, signed, publicly adopted

- Containment
  - Written and structured meeting facilitation
  - Give comments/suggestion perfunctory consideration
  - Do not elaborate or allow them to elaborate
  - Follow strict meeting protocols to reduce opportunities to grandstand.

- Censure
Balancing the School Board

Individual Board Member Characteristics
Understands the difference between a disengaged or rubberstamp board member and an over-reaching or micro-managing board member and practices informed oversight.
Characteristic #2: Role Orientation

- Understands how and when to enact...
  ....... an open dialogue versus
  .......an open debate orientation.

  ◦ An *open dialogue* orientation focuses on general interests and welcomes various viewpoints, but practices unanimous support of final board decisions.

  ◦ An *open debate* orientation focuses on activism and special interests and individual viewpoints over collective consensus. Individual board members do not support final board decisions.
Characteristic #3: Advocacy Focus

- Understands the difference between
  .......being position-driven and
  .......being interest-driven.

  - A position is often polarizing and identifies “friends” versus “enemies”.

  - An interest is discovered through conversation to get to shared solutions that can be applied to many students and achieved through various means.
Characteristic #4: Student Concern Focus

- Understands the difference between a broad focus and a targeted focus on student concerns.

  - A **broad** focus on student concerns includes a stated responsibility to insure all students are afforded opportunities to succeed.

  - A **targeted** focus emphasizes providing opportunities for single groups of students.
Characteristic #5: Solution Focus

- Understands the difference between ............*standardized* and ............*contextualized* solutions.

  - A *standardized solution* is characterized by the belief that one-size-fits-all, and that what works for one district will always work for another. This approach often ignores adequate need assessment.

  - The *contextualized solution* recognizes that the local school district, and each school, has *unique and shifting needs*; often requiring *innovative solutions*. This view supports the need for standards but not standardization.
Standardized Solutions
Characteristic #6: Exercise of Influence

- Understands the difference between ........*individual authority* and ........*collective authority*.
  - Understands *appropriate visibility*. 
School Board Conflict
Mountford (2008) Studies
Understands the difference between the use of voice

.............to *tell and sell* their position versus

.............seeking to *hear and understand*

interests,

and come to resolution and reconciliation.
Understands the difference between

.............*power over* and

.............*power with*.

*Power Over* is using your position to get your own way through threat or reward.

*Power With* is using your position to ensure all voices are heard and collaborative solutions are guaranteed.
Power conceptualized using some combination of both definitions of “power over” and “power with”

*Power is working with others to get them to do what you want them to do.* (Board Member 28M)

*Power to me is providing the resources necessary for principals and teachers to meet the district objectives I have set.* (Superintendent)
Characteristic #9: Decision-making Style

- Understands the difference between **collaborative** and **individual** decision-making.
Understands the difference between altruistic motivation and personal motivation for school board service.
Motivation for Service

- Understands the difference between *altruistic* and *personal* motivation for service.

**Altruistic:**
Desire to help all students
Desire to serve

**Personal:**
To fix a single problem
Ego or prestige
Personal or political need for involvement
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<th>Reported by Board Members</th>
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<td>24%</td>
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Self-Evaluation Profile
Sample Personal Profile

Motivation

Altruistic

Personal

Voice

Low vocal
Silenced

Highly Verbal

Power

Power With

Power Over

Decision-Making

With & thru Others

Individually
Characteristic #6: Exercise of Influence
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