

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Staying balanced



Someone recently asked me, “How should I balance my school board role with my responsibility as a parent?” This

is a difficult issue for many board members and one I faced myself as a school board member for 10 years.

Your first priority is to be an appropriate advocate for your child and his or her needs. Take some time to self-reflect and make sure you are not expecting or requesting any special treatment or favors for your child.

When talking with teachers and staff about your needs and concerns for your child, state clearly in advance that your intent is to discuss issues as a parent. If possible, have your spouse or the child’s other parent handle your concerns. Keep your superintendent informed of your situation and actions. Also, keep in mind the overall context and needs of other children, the teacher and the school system.

Remember to follow the same process you would encourage other parents to follow. It can be challenging, but if you remain aware of your actions and their impact, you can find a winning solution.

PHIL GORE is the Director of Leadership Development Services

## FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL DIRECTORS

### Get connected at WSSDA Regional Meetings

WSSDA’s Regional Meetings provide opportunities for you to connect with fellow board members, your WSSDA board representative and WSSDA staff members. Regional meetings in each director area, a geographic district represented by a WSSDA board member, occur in the spring and the fall across the state. School directors elect their WSSDA board representative from each geographic area.

The Fall 2012 Regional Meetings will take place in October. You will receive a brochure and an email with dates, times and locations for each director area, and your director area representative will send you specific information on your district’s regional meeting.

Your **director area representative** sets the agenda for the regional meeting based on the interests and needs of board directors in their area. On many agendas, there is also time for networking and discussion between board directors. You may also hear from education leaders such as Superintendent of

Public instruction **Randy Dorn**, Deputy Superintendent Alan Burke and **State Board of Education** members who represent WSSDA.

The WSSDA Board President, Executive Director, Jonelle Adams, and WSSDA officers attend these meetings. Jonelle provides updates on WSSDA issues and activities. Governmental Relations Director, Marie Sullivan, keeps everyone informed of **legislative action** and WSSDA priorities through video or live presentations.

You may have an opportunity to attend a workshop prior to many of our regional meetings. Leadership Development Director, Phil Gore and Leadership Specialist, Colleen Miller, lead these workshops.

Look for the regional meeting schedule, available in September, on the **WSSDA website** and in *WSSDA Direct*. I encourage you to attend your regional meeting. It will be a great event for networking, learning and getting connected.

### To be a leader, be a reader

- Each business day, eClippings is e-mailed to WSSDA members with links to local, state, regional and national news articles relevant to board directors.
- During the Legislative session, WSSDA members receive the Legislative Update via email, bringing the latest news from the hill to you. **Subscribe** to these services to keep up-to-date.

## Volume 2

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### ABOUT WSSDA

Founded in 1922, the Washington State School Directors' Association is comprised of all 1,477 school board members from Washington's 295 school districts. The districts they lead serve more than 1,000,000 students, have a combined annual budget of \$6 billion, and employ nearly 100,000 people.

### MISSION

WSSDA provides leadership and advocacy, and empowers its members with knowledge and skills to govern with excellence.

### VISION

All Washington School Directors effectively govern to ensure all students' success.

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# Coming your way

## ■ Graduation ceremonies

The end of the school year brings graduation events. Ask your board chair or president about your roles and responsibilities during the graduation events held in your school district and confirm important dates and times.

## ■ WSSDA Board Self-Assessment and goal setting

Many Washington state school boards participate in a self-assessment survey and set goals for their next school year's work. WSSDA provides a Board Self-Assessment and accompanying report for each board in Washington at no cost to your district. For more information, please contact Colleen Miller at [C.Miller@wssda.org](mailto:C.Miller@wssda.org) for more information.

## ■ District budget

Your board is working to determine budget allocations for the next school year, including human resource costs. Teacher contracts for the next school year are issued by May 15th each year. Here are a couple of questions for consideration during the budgeting process:

- How does your district's fund allocation align with your mission, vision and goals?
- Is there consideration for determining return on investment for some of the allocations?

## DEFINING SCHOOL BOARD ACTIONS

# Open Public Meetings Act

Any school board action, must take place in an open public meeting. State law defines action as the "transaction of the official business of the governing body." The term action, includes deliberation, discussions, considerations, reviews, evaluations and final actions. A final action is an actual vote on a motion. (*Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 42.30.20*).

The definition of action has many implications for communications between board directors. Here are several examples:

1. You and two fellow board directors attend your children's soccer game and your conversation turns to a new policy regarding bullying via social media. This is a violation of the Open Public Meeting Act (OPMA), because developing a policy is the official business of the board.
2. During coffee after a church service, you engage in a conversation with two other board directors and ask if the board holds an annual retreat. This is not in violation of OPMA, because this is information about how the board works. As a new board director, feel free to ask these questions of your board chair or a board colleague.
3. You engaged in a phone conversation with another board director who shared concerns about the superintendent's performance. Your colleague shared that this call is the last of the four he/she made to the rest of the board.

This is a violation known as "a serial meeting." Action in the form of a discussion occurred one after another through the series of phones calls.

Read [\*Open Meetings: A Guide for School Directors and Superintendents\*](#), for more information on the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act and how it affects you.