

Lessons learned

Getting started



When I became a school board member 10 years ago, I didn't anticipate the huge learning curve in front of me. I was excited to get to work,

but one of the things I had to learn was the new language of "educationese." If you are having that experience, here are a couple of suggestions:

- *Highlight unfamiliar acronyms and terms in your board packet. Before your meetings, meet with your board chair or superintendent to unravel mysterious letters.*
- *Remember that complicated language is a barrier to the public. Request that acronyms and uncommon terms be explained during public meetings.*

Keep in mind, that you and your fellow board members are the link between your schools and community.

[Phil Gore](#)

Director, Leadership Development

“**To be a leader, be a reader**”

[Colleen Miller](#) recommends:

The Essential School Board Book

by Nancy Walser

Harvard Education Press

Foundations for successful school directors

Helping you get connected!



Welcome to the 2012 school director cohort! You've joined a community of 1,477 school directors across Washington. All of us at WSSDA want to congratulate you. We are here to support you in your important new role. As part of that, we have introduced this newsletter for new school directors.

One characteristic of successful board members is that they connect to one another and to organizations that serve as resources. Helping you do this is a big part of our job.

We are your Association, providing you with relevant information on legislation, advocacy, and effective practices. We do this through ongoing communication via our newsletter and electronic sources, such as the Legislative Update, Webinars, and podcasts. The WSSDA website contains these resources and more, some of which are targeted to new board members.

One feature of the [website](#) is the [Forum](#), where members discuss topics or ask questions of other members. This forum includes a new board member feature where the cohort of 2012 can network and build collegial relationships. It is a place for sharing perspectives and advice, and raising topics for dialogue. You may view the discussions without registering, but you cannot participate until registered. Again, congratulations. Let us know how we can help.

[Jonelle Adams](#)

WSSDA Executive Director



Tips and tricks

Your personal parking lot

Keep a notepad with you during board sessions. Label it “parking lot” and jot down questions that you need to ask later.



Coming your way

- ✓ **March 30 – April 30 Legislative Special Session: Budget**
Read Marie Sullivan’s legislative updates and discuss the implications for your district with your colleagues.

[Legislative Updates Reports](#)

- ✓ **Budget preparation:** Ask to meet with your superintendent or board chair and get the whole picture on the budget development process for your district.

[Basics of School Finance](#)

- ✓ **Superintendent evaluation:** Many school boards complete the performance evaluation of the superintendent in the spring. Ask for an overview of the process, the superintendent’s contract and the superintendent’s goals so you are prepared to participate in the process.

[Webinar](#)

[Training: Instruments and Evaluation](#)

- ✓ **District Goal/School Improvement Plan**
Be prepared to review progress towards this year’s district improvement goals.

Review the plan, goals and progress measures for each goal. Your superintendent or his/her designee could assist you in gaining understanding prior to the review process later this spring.

[Center for Public Education: Data First](#)

WSSDA resource: [Colleen Miller](#), Training Specialist

The OPMA is for everyone

The Open Public Meetings Act

When legislation is passed that creates a law, it becomes part of the Revised Code of Washington. This is the compilation of all state laws.

The Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 42.30 RCW, is an important law for school boards. Your district’s policies on school board meetings are guided by this Act.

Some important points to remember regarding school board meetings are:

- A board must meet at least once a month, but can meet more often.
- The board’s policy should require that the date, time and place of the meeting be identified so the public can observe the board’s work.
- Minutes must be kept of all regular board meetings such as work sessions and board sessions.

Next Month: Quorum and action makes a meeting!



Contact [Colleen Miller](#), Editor

Visit our website at wssda.org

Call us at 800.562.8927

or 360.252.3000

Mission: The Washington State School Directors’ Association provides leadership, advocacy and services to support public school directors’ efforts to improve student learning.

Vision: WSSDA ensures that local school directors have the skills, policies and resources they need to effectively govern their districts and promote student learning in a safe environment. WSSDA is a trusted, respected advocate for public education and student learning. WSSDA is relied upon by its members, their communities, other policy makers and state and national organizations for its knowledge, professionalism, service, and support.