

# *Montana's Story*



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# *About your speaker...*

- *Personal*
- *Professional*
  - *Education*
  - *Experience*



# Objectives:

- *Share the Montana story so that participants can adapt our experiences to your individual needs*
- *Develop resources to assist with board training through your existing resources*
- *Cultivate an ongoing dialogue to assist one another in our mutual goals of continuous school improvement*



# *History of School Boards*

*1642 – Massachusetts School Ordinance*

*The role and responsibilities of the school board have been evolving since that time, but one thing has remained constant. “The fundamental reason; therefore, for the existence of local school boards is to make the will of the people instrumental in the governance of education” (Dykes, 1965, p.4).*



# *Authority of Boards*

- *Education is a state responsibility since the Constitution does not address the issue of education (Article X, US Constitution).*
- *Boards are a legal entity created by the state legislature to perform duties assigned by that body.*
- *The authority and responsibility belongs to the whole and not to individual members (Wiles and Bondi, 1985).*
  - *School boards are the representative “public” in public education and should lead reform efforts (McAdams, 2002).*



# *Roles & Responsibilities*

- The roles of school board trustees are evolving rapidly and significantly. Although the charge to this governing body is generally described as providing oversight to public schools, the job description is vague and subject to interpretation (Frase, English & Poston, 2001).*
- Montana boards have responsibility for critical tasks such as hiring and firing school personnel, adopting and administering multi-million dollar budgets to trivial tasks such as ensuring that American flags measuring 12" x 18" hang in every classroom (Schmitz, 2007).*



# Training?

- *Twenty states require school board trustee training. Four of those only require training for new trustees and there is no evidence that anyone has been removed from office for not completing mandated training.*
- *Training options include state and national associations—delivered online and face to face.*
- *Topics are varied state to state, but few focus on school improvement as a major training topic.*



# *School boards and student achievement*

*“American education has been unique in the world because of its system of local educational control, featuring elected laypersons serving the key role of school board members...Many are leaders of one sort or another, but few have ever had training that is, especially relevant to the complex, demanding leadership roles they occupy on a school board.”*  
(Coeyman & Chaddock, 2000, 2002, p. 227)





# *Research Shows School Boards can improve Student Achievement*

*Lighthouse Project – ISBA, 2000.*

- 1. Shared Leadership*
- 2. Continuous Improvement and Shared Decision Making*
- 3. Ability to Create and Sustain Initiatives*
- 4. Supportive Workplace for Staff*
- 5. Staff Development*
- 6. Support for School Sites through Data and Information*
- 7. Community Involvement*



# *Eight Characteristics of an Effective School Board*

*Effective schools boards...*

- 1. commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.*
- 2. have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.*

*(cont.)*



# *Eight Characteristics of an Effective School Board*

*Effective schools boards...*

- 3. are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.*
- 4. have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.*

*(cont.)*



# *Eight Characteristics of an Effective School Board*

*Effective schools boards...*

- 5. are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.*
- 6. align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals.*

*(cont.)*



# *Eight Characteristics of an Effective School Board*

*Effective schools boards...*

*7.lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.*

*8.take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and for their improvement efforts. (Center for Public Education, January 2011)*



# *A School Board Coach is..*

*...responsible for the areas of SIG requirements that call for schools to develop and increase teacher and school leader effectiveness, increase learning time, create community-oriented schools, and provide operational flexibility and support.*

*Duties include...*

- Conducting an initial/ongoing assessment of board needs through one-on-one interviews with each board member and school and district staff;*
- Increase capacity around operations, including financial health and budgeting*



# *Duties include (cont.):*

- Identifying structures that will help increase board engagement in increasing student achievement through creating a trusting environment, establishing a shared vision and high expectations, creating a collaborative culture, and embedding continuous improvement and support in all policy and decision making*
- Attend monthly board meetings and build capacity among trustees and administrations with development and implementation of board agendas*
- Develop capacity of board members through resources/information, targeted professional development and training sessions.*





# *Other stakeholders*

- *Superintendent\**
- *Administrative Team\**
- *Board Clerk\**
- *Community Members*
- *PTA*
- *Elders' Council*
- *Labor/Management Team*
- *District Staff*

- *(\*Training is also provided to these stakeholders)*





# *Public Agenda*

*What's Trust Got to Do with it?*

*Everything!*



# Processes

- *Attend all meetings (including committee meetings)*
- *Prepare and present trainings and retreats*
- *Assist with developing policies and keeping them current (SIG supportive policies)*
- *Support financial oversight (reports and budget)*
- *Develop relationships with stakeholders through interviews*
  - *Assist with agenda preparation, assuring that student achievement and related items are before the board regularly*
  - *Communicate with all stakeholders*
  - *Provide information regarding SOPPAS*
  - *Assist with collective bargaining process*



# Resources

- *Monthly newsletter detailing the school improvement work within the district*
- *Monthly finance calls with SEA finance staff, superintendent, clerk, transformational leader and school board coach*
- *Coordination with site-based SEA SIG team*
- *Monthly meetings with board chair and superintendent to plan agendas and de-brief meetings*
  - *Researched training materials (State and National School Board Assoc. [Key Work], books, and articles)*
  - *Quarterly report cards*
  - *SOPPAS (Schools of Promise Performance Appraisal System) documents and training*



# Resources

- *Twelve month calendar of important task and dates*
- *Agenda template*
- *Self assessment for boards*
- *Superintendent evaluations forms*
- *Board clerk evaluations forms*
- *Job descriptions for school district personnel*
- *Vision/mission statements*
- *Training materials*
  - *Identification of duties (clerk, board, superintendent)*
  - *Handbooks*
  - *Communication with the public document*



# Capacity & Sustainability

*Developing collaborative and shared leadership with our focus on school improvement is foundational to our School Improvement Grant (SIG) work. Creating capacity and focus on student achievement within our policymakers will help to continue our work beyond our time in the district. If we are able to develop trustees who concentrate on student achievement, students and the communities we serve will benefit. Using the lens of improvement in*

*decision making, resource allocation, personnel decisions, etc., school board members will be able to lead reform efforts in their communities.*



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