

Considering Board Priorities At the Board Table

At the Board Table Discussion Tool



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Introduction

As a service on the IASB web site, we offer this “At the Board Table” as a way for your board to have a 15-40 minute “board development” item on your agenda. Boards that take time to discuss how they will work together generally find their common work at the board table to be easier and more effective.

It's possible to consider this section as an individual board member, but it is much more effective if the entire board engages in the discussion. Working as a team is improved when boards come to a common understanding of ground rules and responsibilities.

If your board team conducts one of these discussions at your board table, each participant will earn two Better Boardsmanship points per session.

Next Steps for Meeting Facilitators

1. Add a development item to your next board meeting agenda.
2. Download or open the presentation from the web site [here](#).
3. Print off the hand-outs on pages 3 and 4 for each board member and include in their board packet, if you wish.
4. Read through the Facilitator's Notes
5. Conduct the exercise with your entire board.
6. Once you've completed the discussion, complete and return the form on page 6 to receive Better Boardsmanship credits.

Facilitator's Notes

This is an opportunity for you, as a board, to discuss priorities. It is not meant to result in a list of firm goals, but rather to acquaint the board with the values of other board members, to learn about the reasons for those values, and to discuss core similarities.

- Please make sure the superintendent has an opportunity to view this exercise ahead of time and think about his/her responses.
- To prepare participants for the “rules” please note that this is a simulation and they have to make a choice. They can’t simply say, “We will choose having financial stability and use that to buy everything else.” Everything comes at a cost...time, money, energy. You simply cannot “have it all.”
- This exercise is only that...an exercise in clarifying what is important to people. Let board members know at the end of the exercise that they have made a good beginning in opening up discussion; but it is only that...a beginning.
- After the discussion, be sure and look at the reasons IASB has identified for each choice. Give the superintendent an opportunity to talk about how the district “fits” in the situations described.
- If there is a great deal of similarity among board members’ choices, celebrate that! Talk about what your greatest hopes are for this area.
- If there is great disparity in choices, talk about what you might need to do to come together around core values that are driving those differences. IASB can help you.

The Rules

Rule One: This is individual work; do not discuss your choices at this time.

Rule Two: You must acknowledge that the great benefit in this area will only come at a cost to other areas. For example: Solid fiscal security might mean making cuts in programming or staff. It may mean delaying some purchases of, or the updating of, equipment. If you are about to visit the SBRC (School Budget Review Committee) this priority still may have a great appeal. If you already have a 10% fiscal solvency ratio, perhaps not.

Rule Three: You may spend all your money in one place, or you may spend \$80 on one priority area and \$20 in another. These are your only two options. The money may not go to more than two areas or be allocated in any amounts other than the \$80/\$20 split; or to a single item.

Rule Four: You may choose from among the following list of areas. Please do so individually and be prepared to “defend” your allocation in two sentences. Refer to your district mission statement (posted) as you prepare this “defense.” Note you have the option of creating one new or additional area, but only one.

The Choices

Choose to allocate your “magic resource” to one (or two in an \$80/\$20 split) of the following areas, write your “why” in the space provided below:

- Increase in course offerings and programming to better meet a wide variety of individual needs
- Informed community engagement with and knowledge of the school district’s needs and strengths
- Solid fiscal security
- Quality professional development focused on improving instruction
- Infrastructure development (Buildings, buses, equipment updating— from air-conditioning to a zippy new track)
- Technology: Increasing the use of technology to improve higher level learning.
- Your Choice

The Whys:

\$80: _____

\$20: _____

OR

\$100: _____

Notice of Participation Form

For Iowa board members: After taking part in this board discussion, you will be eligible to receive Better Boardsmanship credits. For IASB to track your participation, please complete this form and return to:

Iowa Association of School Boards
ATTN: Board Leadership Team
6000 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50312
Fax: (515) 243-4992 Email: cbloyer@ia-sb.org

Title of Tool: Discussing School Staff Performance with the Public

Date: _____ **District:** _____
(please print)

Participants (Print your name and tell us if you are a board member, president, vice president or superintendent.)

Name _____	Role _____
Name _____	Role _____
Name _____	Role _____
Name _____	Role _____
Name _____	Role _____
Name _____	Role _____
Name _____	Role _____
Name _____	Role _____

Summary of Session (Please provide a short summary of how your discussion went and any feedback on this tool.)
