

In the Name of God, Most, Gracious, Most Merciful

HOW TO CONDUCT PRODUCTIVE, EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETINGS



**Presented by
Necva Ozgur M. Ed.
April 2007**

MERIT

www.meritcenter.org
nozgur@meritcenter.org

HOW TO CONDUCT PRODUCTIVE, EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

So you have a dream board and superstar trustees; if you also have productive, effective meetings, then you are moving towards high-impact governance. As in the process of creating a dream board, it is essential to meet standards of excellence that must first be identified and implemented so we can begin to hold productive and effective meetings. The board chair conducts meetings according to the standards of excellence adopted by all board members. The board chair is also responsible for clarifying the roles for each member, utilizing agendas and minute books, and adopting consensus-building techniques amongst other approaches to streamlining board meetings.

- **Guidelines for Effective Board Meetings**
- **Guidelines for Building an Agenda**
- **Standards of Excellence for Board Meetings**
- **How do you use Standards to Evaluate Board Meetings?**

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

One of the main responsibilities of the board chair is to conduct successful board meetings. An ideal board meeting is one in which every trustee leaves feeling that his/her presence made a difference.

1. At the beginning of the year, develop an annual agenda derived from the board's strategic priorities. Based on the number and scope of these issues, determine how many board meetings are likely to be needed during the year and how the topics should be distributed throughout the calendar.
2. Establish a clear purpose for the each board meeting. Make sure that everyone knows what the desired outcomes are for each portion of the meeting, so they can come prepared to discuss, decide, approve, or receive information for each item on the agenda.
3. Prepare agendas with priorities. Place important items first on the agenda. Routine items can be part of a consent agenda, or can be placed last on the agenda.
4. Maintain focus during the meeting. While the chair runs the meeting, the entire board shares the responsibility for keeping the discussion on track. Digressions and comments unrelated to the item at hand are an unwise use of time, and diminish the effectiveness of the entire board.
5. Strive for consensus. Not every decision will be unanimous, but the more decisions that are arrived at through discussion and consensus, the better the chance for successful implementation. If it takes an additional 30 minutes of discussion, or even carrying the item over to another meeting in order to give board members the opportunity for thoughtful consideration of the issue, it will be time well spent in gathering support for the final decision.
6. Seek completion of each item. Make sure everyone is clear on the implications of a decision. What are the next steps? Who is responsible for taking what actions? What is the date for a progress report to the board? Who needs to be informed of the decision? The board and the school head should leave the meeting with clear understanding of what will happen next.
7. Critique the board meeting. It can be helpful to spend as little as five minutes at the conclusion of the meeting asking board members for comments on how the meeting went in terms of participation by all members, following the agenda, or keeping within planned time limits.
8. Create a short form for use at the end of board meetings to evaluate whether issues covered were trivial or essential, whether materials provided were useless or indispensable, and whether discussion concerned operations or policy and strategy.
9. Develop guidelines for reaching consensus. Use the following sample to create yours:
 - We accept that different views and values are healthy and will help us come to satisfactory decision
 - We will utilize each person's experience that has some bearing on our problem
 - We will all present our positions as clearly as possible and answer questions
 - We will not argue over others' position; instead we will ask questions that will encourage understanding of different positions
 - We will take whatever time is needed to reach a consensus
 - We will explore each person's position thoroughly

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING AN AGENDA

1. The agenda is the blueprint for the meeting; if care is taken in designing the agenda, the meeting will accomplish what is intended. An agenda provides an orderly way for the board to accomplish its responsibilities, receive and share information about the school's activities, and take the action necessary for conducting the school's business.
2. Typically the principal and the board chair prepare the agenda after providing opportunity for board members to request that certain items be included.
3. Board members should receive the agenda a week prior to the meeting so that they have time to prepare; they need to know what to expect. A few days' notice gives them time to read supporting materials and prepare for their part in the meeting.
4. A typical agenda will include the following items:
 - Date, time, and place of the meeting
 - Agenda items and desired action for each item (information, discussion, decision)
 - Persons responsible for each item
 - Time allotted for each item
5. A consent agenda includes routine and information items that require no additional presentation and discussion at the meeting (receipt of routine reports). A consent agenda can streamline meetings by combining action on standard items to one motion. Any board member may request that an item be clarified and/or removed from the consent agenda for additional discussion before voting. Benefits of the consent agenda:
 - Expediting business at the meeting
 - Facilitating the handling of routine items
 - Saving time in recording the minutesby combining several actions into one motion to approve the consent agenda
6. Board members may request to place items on agenda and they identify agenda items by policy, information, administration, action, decision, etc. They also need to estimate projected time for each item. The board chair and the principal will decide if those requests are needed to be in the agenda for that meeting and they prioritize agenda items in descending order of importance

STANDARDS FOR BOARD MEETINGS

1. The board chair runs meetings in a fair, open-minded, professional, and orderly fashion
2. The agenda is well-designed by the board chair and school head
3. The board chair and the school head convene before meetings to clarify agenda items and anticipate problem areas
4. The board-developed procedures for the board package is received by the board members in advance
5. The board sticks to its agenda. The board chair keeps board members on task
6. Each board member is given an adequate opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making
7. There is a respectful atmosphere in the board room
8. The board members relate to each other and to the school head in a courteous, dignified, fair, and ethical manner
9. Board members always have the educational well-being of children as the top priority
10. The board always bases its decisions according to the mission of the school
11. Board members support decisions made by the board, even if they disagree during the discussion
12. Board members recognize that they have no individual power, and operate accordingly
13. Standard parliamentary procedures and bylaws are followed
14. Board minutes are kept in an organized minutes book
15. Board meetings start and adjourn on time
16. Board members arrive at meetings on time and stay until the meeting is adjourned
17. Board members read their agenda packets before the meeting and prepare to discuss issues on the agenda
18. The board adopts written policies and procedures for conducting board meetings
19. The board defers action on items not on the agenda until they can be studied and discussed, and the administration has had a chance to respond
20. The board works toward compromise and consensus when there are disagreements among members

BOARD MEETING EVALUATION

This survey is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Board meeting. Your input is greatly appreciated and will be used in planning the next meetings. Please review the statements below and circle the box that most closely represents your perception of the meeting. Thank you! Your input is very valuable. Please share your further comments about the meeting

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Uncertain; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

1	The board chair runs meetings in a fair, open-minded, professional and orderly fashion	SA	A	U	D	SD
2	The agenda is well-designed by the board chair and school head	SA	A	U	D	SD
3	The board chair and the school head convene before meetings to clarify agenda items and anticipate problem areas	SA	A	U	D	SD
4	The board-developed procedures for the board package are to be received by the board members in advance	SA	A	U	D	SD
5	The board sticks to its agenda. The board chair keeps board members on task	SA	A	U	D	SD
6	Each board member is given an adequate opportunity to participate in discussion and decision making	SA	A	U	D	SD
7	There is a respectful atmosphere in the board room	SA	A	U	D	SD
8	The board members relate to each other and to school head courteous, dignified, fair, and ethical manner	SA	A	U	D	SD
9	Board members always have the educational well-being of children as the top priority	SA	A	U	D	SD
10	The board always bases its decisions according to the mission of the school	SA	A	U	D	SD
11	Board members support decisions made by the board, even if they disagree during the discussion	SA	A	U	D	SD
12	Board members recognize that they have no individual power, and operate accordingly	SA	A	U	D	SD
13	The board follows standard parliamentary procedures and bylaws are followed	SA	A	U	D	SD
14	Board minutes are kept in an organized minutes book	SA	A	U	D	SD
15	Board meetings start on time and adjourn on time	SA	A	U	D	SD
16	Board members arrive at meetings on time and stay until the meeting is adjourned	SA	A	U	D	SD
17	Board members read their agenda packets before the meeting and prepare to discuss issues on the agenda	SA	A	U	D	SD
18	The board adopts written policies and procedures for conducting board meetings	SA	A	U	D	SD
19	The board defers action on items not on the agenda until they can be studied and discussed, and the administration has had a chance to respond	SA	A	U	D	SD
20	The board works toward compromise and consensus when there are disagreements among members	SA	A	U	D	SD