COMMUNICATION IS THE SKELETON KEY TO EFFECTIVE BOARD–SUPERINTENDENT TEAMS

ASBA Wednesday Webinar Series
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PRESENTERS:

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Today's Discussion

Today we will cover:

- Communication Basics
- Communication Styles
- Communication Protocols & Agreements for Boards
"THE ART OF EFFECTIVE LISTENING IS ESSENTIAL TO CLEAR COMMUNICATION AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION IS NECESSARY TO MANAGEMENT"

JAMES CASH PENNY
COMMUNICATION BASICS

- Listen
- Reflect
- Project
- Discuss
LISTENING PITFALLS

INITIAL LISTENING - HEAR THE FIRST BIT AND ASSUME YOU KNOW THE REST

SELECTIVE LISTENING - HEAR WHAT YOU WANT, DISREGARD THE REST

BIASED LISTENING - PREJUDICE THE TOPIC, SOURCE OR SPEAKER. HEAR WITH OPINION ALREADY MADE

DEFENSIVE LISTENING - LISTENING FOR ANYTHING THAT COULD BE AN ATTACK, CRITICISM OR HOSTILE.

AMBUSH LISTENING - LISTENING FOR ANYTHING THAT COULD BE USED AGAINST ANOTHER PERSON
REFLECT

• WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO SAY?
  ○ WHAT CONCERNS DO THEY HAVE?
  ○ WHAT DO THEY WANT TO SEE HAPPEN?

• AM I UNDERSTANDING THEM CORRECTLY?
  ○ TRY SUMMARIZING (E.G. WHAT I HEARD YOU SAYING IS... IS THAT CORRECT?)
  ○ AVOID SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE (E.G. WHAT JOYCE IS TRYING TO SAY IS....)

• HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WHAT WAS SAID?
  ○ ARE YOU ANGRY, ANNOYED, CONFUSED, OFFENDED, INDIFFERENT?
  ○ TRY SUMMARIZING (SEE ABOVE) AND, IF NEEDED, SHARE YOUR FEELING (E.G. I AM CONFUSED BY WHAT YOU JUST SAID BECAUSE...)
  ○ AVOID MAKING ACCUSATION ABOUT OR MINIMIZING THE THOUGHTS OF OTHERS. (E.G. “YOU JUST HAVE AN AGENDA!” OR “THAT’S RIDICULOUS”.)
PROJECT

DO YOU LOOK LIKE YOU ARE LISTENING?

- BODY LANGUAGE - DOES YOUR FACE AND BODY PROJECT LISTENING?
  - EYE ROLLS, Sighs, Tapping, Looking Around, Shaking Your Head

- TONE OF VOICE - DOES YOUR TONE DEMONSTRATE A DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND OR DISMISS?
  - Tricky tone can be perceived differently depending on communication style
  - Both loud and soft voices can be seeking to understand or dismissive
ALL MEMBERS ARE EQUALLY ENTITLED TO AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS AND BE HEARD.

- CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN, ASK QUESTIONS AND DISCUSS VIEWS
- AIM FOR CONSENSUS - CONSENSUS IS GENERAL AGREEMENT (CAN LIVE WITH IT)
- DOCUMENT AGREEMENTS. MAY NEED TO BE REFERRED TO LATER
- WHERE CONSENSUS CAN'T BE REACHED, EVEN AFTER FULL BOARD DISCUSSION, NOTE IT BUT MOVE FORWARD.
TEAM MEMBER STYLE

DIRECT - ASSERTIVE, FORWARD THINKING
SPIRITED - ENERGETIC, CREATIVE
CONSIDERATE - THOUGHTFUL, SUPPORTIVE
SYSTEMATIC - CONSISTENT, WELL ORGANIZED

ASBA FACILITATED TRAINING
COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS
When the practices and protocols of the group are discussed, agreed upon, documented and referred to teams:

- Promote mutual understanding
- Improve consistency
- Build trust
- Reduce non-productive conflict
- Foster collaboration
- Improve efficacy and effectiveness of the board
What information can the Board expect from the Superintendent and how often?

How quickly will the Superintendent respond to Board member questions? Will answers to individual questions be sent to the Board?

What is the process for when an individual member makes a request of the Superintendent?

Understanding the Board supervises the Superintendent, not individual members, what is the process for requests that may require significant time or effort to be redirected?
AGENDA SETTING

- When will the Board President and Superintendent meet to discuss the agenda? When will it be made available to the Board?

- To whom should Board members direct their questions about the agenda? By when?

- How do Board members get items placed on the agenda? How will request be tracked?

- What agreements exist for how agenda items will be added, prioritized, or blocked?
MEETINGS

• What agreements exist around board meetings? (before, during, after)

• What rules or protocols are used to ensure all members get an opportunity to speak?

• What are your rules of order?

• What other expectations exist in terms of etiquette or process?
SITE VISITS

- What is the protocol for when board members attend district or campus events?

- How should board members go about arranging site visits? What expectations are in place for when board members visit sites?

- What is the expectation of board members who visit schools where they have a family member who is a student/staff?

- What should board members do if they observe something that is concerning?
FAMILIES/ STAFF/ COMMUNITY

- WHERE SHOULD QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS BE DIRECTED? WHAT IS THE CHAIN OF COMMAND?

- WHO SHOULD RESPOND TO COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO THE ENTIRE BOARD? HOW WILL THE REST OF THE BOARD KNOW A RESPONSE WAS MADE?

- WHAT EXPECTATIONS DOES THE BOARD HAVE ABOUT BEING INFORMED ABOUT COMPLAINTS?

- WHO CAN SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD AND WHEN?

THERE'S POLICY FOR THAT
ASBA IS HERE TO HELP
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