

Director's UPDATE

A publication of the Arkansas School Boards Association

Director's Message

Well, another school year has come and gone and we find ourselves in the throes of what so far seems to be a long hot summer. Many school board agendas will be less crowded, providing a great opportunity to take stock: Review your policies, evaluate your work as a board, revisit the law that establishes the duties and responsibilities of schools boards, check up on how you're faring with the Standards for Arkansas School Boards, and review the code of ethics from which you operate.

Too often I get phone calls from some of you who haven't quite found the balance between governance and the daily operations of your school districts. Understanding what your role is in this enterprise called public education will make for more harmonious relationships within your district. Your primary job is policymaking to ensure all aspects of your district are functioning as they should. The only employee in your district for whom you have responsibility is the person you hired to serve as your superintendent of schools. He or she is the only staff member you should interview and the primary source of information you receive. Interviewing teachers or principals, coaches or classified employees is not your job. If you've been guilty of the temptation to micromanage, now is a good time to change your ways.

Candidates are beginning to appear for the annual school elections in September. The public you represent deserves good school board members. Perhaps you can help ensure high quality board members by helping inform your community and the candidates about what school boards can and can't do. Direct school board candidates to our Web site (www.arsba.org). There they can find a PDF version of The Handbook for Arkansas School Board Members. It covers the waterfront of school board work. If candidates know the rules before they play the game, their chance of success goes way up.

Every member of your board, whether you're elected by zone or at-large, should assume their service is provided for ALL the students in your district. When you narrow your focus to only those people in your zone, you are failing to ensure that each child in the district is at the center of all your decisions.

When new members are elected, don't just leave them wondering about their roles or the operations of your district. We always provide an orientation for the newly elected at our annual New Board Member Institute, but a local orientation is also a good idea. Perhaps being a

Presentations sought for ASBA Annual Conference

The Arkansas School Boards Association is seeking school boards and school board/superintendent leadership teams to present breakout sessions at the 2010 ASBA Annual Conference, which will be held December 8-10 at the Peabody Hotel and Statehouse Convention Center.

Presentation topics should cover a process, policy, program, or strategy that was implemented by the school board in response to an identified need (such as poor board team work, strained board/superintendent relations, hiring a new superintendent, academic distress, fiscal distress, etc.).

Additionally, the process, policy, program or strategy must have been in effect long enough to have clearly demonstrated its effectiveness in some measureable way. All topics should focus on board governance practices that may be replicated by other school districts.

Presentation criteria and a presentation submission form are available on the ASBA website at www.arsba.org. Deadline for submission is July 30, 2010.

New Board Member Institute Reminder

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

DoubleTree Hotel, Little Rock

Be sure your new school board members receive valuable training in their roles and responsibilities. Registration information will be available at

www.arsba.org.

**Arkansas School
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P. O. Box 165460
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Digital School District Survey: 2010 Call for entries

The Center for Digital Education, in conjunction with the National School Boards Association, is conducting the 2010 Digital School District Survey.

Public school districts are invited to participate in the study, which showcases and acknowledges those school districts and boards around the nation that are using information technology tools to serve their communities, schools, teachers, students and administrators.

It highlights the boards' online presence, the technology applications that allow the public to interact with school board members, electronic access to information such as school board calendars, policies and agendas, and technology advancements in the school board chambers.

Deadline to participate in the survey is August 6, 2010. Visit www.centerdigitaled.com/2010DigDistricts for more information and access to the survey.

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mentor for a new member would be helpful—to the new member and for the benefit of board operations. Having someone who “knows the ropes” can help build the knowledge and the confidence required for optimal board service.

The role of the school board member is different than that of any other elected official. You get no pay and few compliments. You get lots of criticism, but when you get rewards, they are great because they are all about the successes of your students and your employees. You can bask in the shared pride you feel with your colleagues—for only they (and those who preceded them) can truly appreciate the joy that school board service provides. At the end of the day, that's one of life's greatest payoffs.

— Dan Farley, Executive Director