



# Reframing School Board Behaviors

Arkansas School Boards Association

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[Boardsthatwork.org](http://Boardsthatwork.org)



Changes

NEXT EXIT 

# What do you see coming in the future?





- What does a high performing board look like? (Flip chart)

- What do you want your meetings to look like?

- If you were rebuilding yourself as a board, what would you change to make it more effective?
- Can't you control all of those things?

- How do you want your fellow board members to perceive you?
- ANSWER THIS: Do you believe this system can go to the next level?
- What will it take?

- What FRUSTRATES you most at board meetings?
- Can these issues be resolved?

- Is your board ATTRACTIVE?
- Success is something you attract.
- If you want to attract quality people, you have to be quality yourself.
- Won't attract great superintendents if you aren't attractive.
- GO TO WAR FOR TALENT.

Tell the person sitting next to you one thing you would like to see the board accomplish this year.





# Eye Brow Test- 15 Seconds





- Did you know that your system is perfectly designed to get the results you are getting?
- Your organizational structure must aligned with the right things.

- There is no magic pill you don't know about.
- Key to good board work is EXECUTION, not innovation.
- Very few new ideas in education.

- Recent research showed that 88% of the board members in districts being taken over by the state rated their performance highly successful.

- We see personalities, power struggles, and politics in every meeting. These are good if you use them the right way.
- Can you vote for what's right rather than what is popular? We often see boards buckle when community interest groups come to meetings.
- We see many board members trying to promote themselves in an effort to get re-elected or appointed. Why? You will do your best work when you don't mind if you are not re-appointed.



- Uniform Curriculum- Uniform Delivery
- No new ideas!!!
- Reform comes from within.

- A board is a place where **VERY COMPETENT** individuals can come together and form a very incompetent board.
- Does your board have a **VISION?**

- If you were rebuilding yourself as a board, what would you change to make it more effective?
- Can't you control all of those things?
- Do you believe your system can go to the next level? What will it take?

# Would you like to work with this board?

- Obsessed with trivia concerns
- Short-term focus
- Reactive stance
- Review, rehash, redo staff work
- Consistent spilt votes
- Grandstanding
- Playing to the audience
- Violating confidence

- Lack of clear focus
  - Role confusion
  - Useless policy
  - Reactive orientation
  - "Fix-it" mentality
- 
- The end result? Inability to make a difference!

# Ask The Right Questions

- What is the goal of this initiative
- How does it align with our vision, mission, and system goals?
- How much will it cost? What data tells us that merits the cost?



- What data supports the notion that it will achieve the desired results?
- Is staff ready to implement it? If not, what's our plan?
- How does it fit with our existing activities? Does it conflict with anything we're already doing?

- How will we evaluate the results?
- You are not expected to be EXPERTS. You can be overwhelmed at all the jargon, technical language, and policies.
- \*\*Texas Board– Straight Lines.

- My research reveals that board members get overwhelmed with all they have to do, and this can often paralyze productivity.
- Key to high achievers is they **SHRINK** the work of boards.

- Boards want, and demand, change. BUT, they don't want FACES put to that change. Change, but do it with things like they are. They want change around the edges.
- When boards stabilize, good things happen.

- Research revealed that low performing communities want QUICK fixes and super human things done and they pressure board members to get it done– and failure is the result.

- Many think boards are a thing of the past.
- What do you think?
- You will be evaluated soon, so the question is "who will do it".
- You are now in the Crosshairs.



- When things don't work , you have to tear them down and start over----- That's where you make ENEMIES.
- Can I vote on what's right rather than fearing making people mad?

- People don't leave bad school systems, they leave bad bosses.
- They leave flawed leadership.
- Bad leadership runs off your great teachers and administrators.

# What Are Your Success Indicators?

- Have a planned design for success.
- Superintendent work as a team.
- Don't blame poor results on a lack of resources.
- Great leadership is in great demand.  
A very scarce quality.

- If you don't have it, find it. Pay for it.
- School improvement starts at the top— Board Level.
- Don't yield to special interest groups. (Alabama- Naming football stadium)

- Special interest groups will force you to make bad decisions and make you look bad.
- Ego– Amigo

- Must be skilled at knowing one thing-  
What matters most. Take care of  
that first.
- Stand united. It is your armor  
against your distractors.

- Key quality of a great leader is TRUST. Same is true from the board. They must trust you.
- You get trust by being consistent over and over again.

- Stick to your agenda. It is your savior.
- Serve and act like you will be there only ONE term. That's where you will do your best.



- What you pay attention to gets done. Rely on the experts to get you through difficult times.
- Ask yourself, "Is it them, or is it us?" If you aren't getting the results you are after, who's fault is it?

- When things don't work, you have to tear them down and start over. That's where you make enemies.
- We love change until our leaders put a face to it.

# Three P's That Hold Us Back

- 1. Politics
- 2. Personalities
- 3. Power Struggles

- Clone your bright spots.
- Look for inch pebbles. (IBM)
- Great teaching is the cheapest form of school improvement. Any any program is merely supplementary and if intended otherwise, you will be sadly disappointed.

- Your school system is perfectly designed to achieve the results you are getting.
- You need FEEDBACK to take you to the next level of performance.
- Pavarotti- Saved 2 seats at every performance.

- 1. You don't trust your fellow board members.
- 2. You get the feeling that you, or some members, are being kept out of the loop.
- 3. Meetings are non-productive.

- 4. Signs of disrespect start appearing.
- 5. One, or two, members try to monopolize the meeting.
- 6. You start feeling that things just aren't right.

- 7. Your board meeting is the most talked about event in town.
- 8. Politics is evident to everyone in the room.
- 9. Power coalitions begin to emerge.



- 10. Every board members is trying hard to get re-elected, or appointed.(The money can't be that good.)
- 11. Tend to do what is popular rather than what is right.

- 12. Boards begin to blame each other. (Have to be ONE VOICE).

- What legacy do you want to leave?
- What are your BELIEFS about being on the board?
- Your BEHAVIOR affects your performance, and your performance produces RESULTS.

- "94% of failure is the result of the system, not the people." Edwards Deming

- If a new family moves to your school district, and they ask you why should they send their children there. What would you tell them.
- If you have problems answering that, you are in trouble.

- Why would a parent want to send their child to your school system?
- What makes your system different from the others, or better than the others?

- Exercise: Come up with 3-5 reasons why a person would be fortunate to send their child to your system.
- Let's take about 3-4 minutes to write down a couple. If you would like, share with the group.

- Operational policies will NOT move the district forward, but leadership policies will.



- Mobile Board Member
- For great things to happen, people have to start behaving differently.
- Weight loss

- We found in our research that board members get plenty of training.
- They know what to do.
- Their behaviors keep them from doing it.

# Principles of Great Board Governance:

- Boards need to have their arms around the system but no fingers in it.
- Good boards realize they don't need to know everything going on in the system. There is no way they can know, but some board members want to know every little thing.

- Good boards don't concern themselves too much with what's going on, but rather what's **COMING OUT**.

- How long are you willing to wait to see results?
- Great boards always focus on the ends rather than the means.

# PRINCIPLE #1

- The Board is accountable to the stakeholders, and serves as their trustee. (Note: It is the Board's responsibility to see that the community is ENGAGED- Put community people on sub-committees, etc.. Good cross section of stakeholders. Those are the folks you represent.

# PRINCIPLE #2

- The Board knows that its job is, and is responsible for its own performance.
- Having a plan makes it more probable you will hit the right target.
- You succeed or fail by your ENDS, not the MEANS.

# PRINCIPLE #3

- Boards plans its own work, and faithfully concentrates on its Governance role.
- Boards need to make a FEW really good decisions, not 100's.



# PRINCIPLE #4

- The Board is active, but not intrusive.
- Remember, focus on the ENDS.

# PRINCIPLE #5

- Highly functioning Board members recognize the value of acting as a Unit, even when unanimity is elusive.
- One-Voice.

# PRINCIPLE #6

- Great Boards effectively monitor both the organization and its own performance.
- How do you want to be perceived by the public?
- What do I contribute as a board member?

- If I left the board today, would I be missed?
- What talents do you bring to the board?
- Why do you want to be on the board?

# PRINCIPLE #7

- Great Boards control the organization through policy, not through "Resolutions" or Approving Administrative Recommendations.
- Good Boards say unless we have prohibited it, it is permissible.

# PRINCIPLE #8

- The Board owns the vision for organizational performance.
- Traditional boards don't usually do this, the Superintendent is usually responsible.

# PRINCIPLE #9

- He who makes the decision is accountable for the result.

# PRINCIPLE #10

- The Board considers the performance of the organization and the performance of the Superintendent to be identical.
- Boards most urgent Question is NOT "What are we doing?" but rather "Is what we're doing getting the desired results– and how do we know?"



- Goals with predetermined indicators of success will “let the board know!”

- Great boards set Goals with measurable indicators of success.
- A Goal addresses desired accomplishments which are achievable within a specified time frame and are objectively measured.
- Goal-setting is the responsibility of the Board.

- Setting Goals is easy, but without data indicators, they usually are unreachable.
- Once goals are adopted, the Board must have some way to see if the goals are being achieved.

- Reports that are longitudinal and give comparative information through graphs and charts are generally easier to understand than written reports.
- Use Red- Danger
- Orange- Caution
- Green- Go/Good
- STRAIGHT LINES- TEXAS

# Center for Board Behavior Reform

- Who we are.
- Our research.
- Miranda Beard

# Former President of NSBA



- What makes our training the most unique in the country?
- Based on research.
- How we do it.

- How do we modify our behavior?
- Positive reinforcement



- If "how to do it" were the answer, it would be done.
- If access to the right information were the right answer, we'd all be super effective.

- The **board President** is the key to board effectiveness.
- The superintendent's lifeline.

- Special interest groups will force you to make bad decisions and make you look bad.
- Ego– Amigo

- Can your problems be solved by TRAINING?
- TRAINING often fails to work because the problem is cultural. Could training change the culture? If not– good luck!

- Boards in the future simply cannot just do everything other boards do. They have to stand out. The public will demand it.
- You need people to take what you have and take you higher with it.

- Many think boards are a thing of the past.
- What do you think?
- You will be evaluated soon, so the question is "who will do it".

- When things don't work, you have to tear them down and start over--- That's where you make ENEMIES.
- Can I vote on what's right rather than fearing making people mad?

- What is it about governing a school district that makes it such a formidable challenge?



- Some boards seem to govern well.
- But for every board that works well, there seems to be scores of others that simply can't get their acts together.

# What are the consequences of poor governance?

- You know dysfunctional boards when you see them. You see this:
  - 1. They function not as a single unit, but as a collection of individuals.
  - 2. They live in a world of operations, not of results.

- 3. No issue is too insignificant to fight about; in fact, it seems that the smaller the issue, the more eager members are to fight about it.
- 4. Members trust no one; not each other, and certainly not their superintendents.

- 5. Meetings are long and unproductive, rarely focused on anything related to kids and whether they are succeeding.
- 6. Meeting agendas are dominated by budgets, bonds, building, buses, bricks, boilers, and bickering.

- 7. Every administrative decision is to be questioned and sometimes reversed, including personnel decisions.
- Poor board performance is not a fate handed down to any board, but rather a chosen option.

# People Always Oppose Three Things:

- What they don't know how to do.
- What they don't understand.
- What they don't believe in.

# What are the Elephants in Your Boardroom?





- How do you want to be perceived by the public?
- When others talk about you, what do you want them to say?



- Suggestion: FOCUS ON THE IMPACT, IGNORE THE NOISE.
- If your system isn't where you want it to be, whose fault is it?

- Study- Lee & Ward- Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Georgia.
- Research that led to our focus on board behaviors.

# Original Study- Board Perceptions

- Sent to school boards in four states: North Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Sent to board presidents to distribute to entire board.
- Superintendent was left out of this process.
- There is no national ranking of high performing school systems, only by school. Used State Department of Education data.
- Go over 500 responses.

# What's keeping you from doing these things?

Sometimes the thing that is holding you back...



...is all in your head.

# Current Research

**Dr. David Lee's (2014-Present) ground-breaking research with school boards revealed a direct link between board member behaviors and student achievement.**

**Compared to high & medium performing school districts, low performing districts' board meetings were**

- **less orderly;**
- **spent less time on student achievement or plans for relevant academic district improvement;**

- did not listen respectfully and attentively to the person speaking;
- had board meeting members advancing their own agenda;
- had less good working relationships among the governance team;

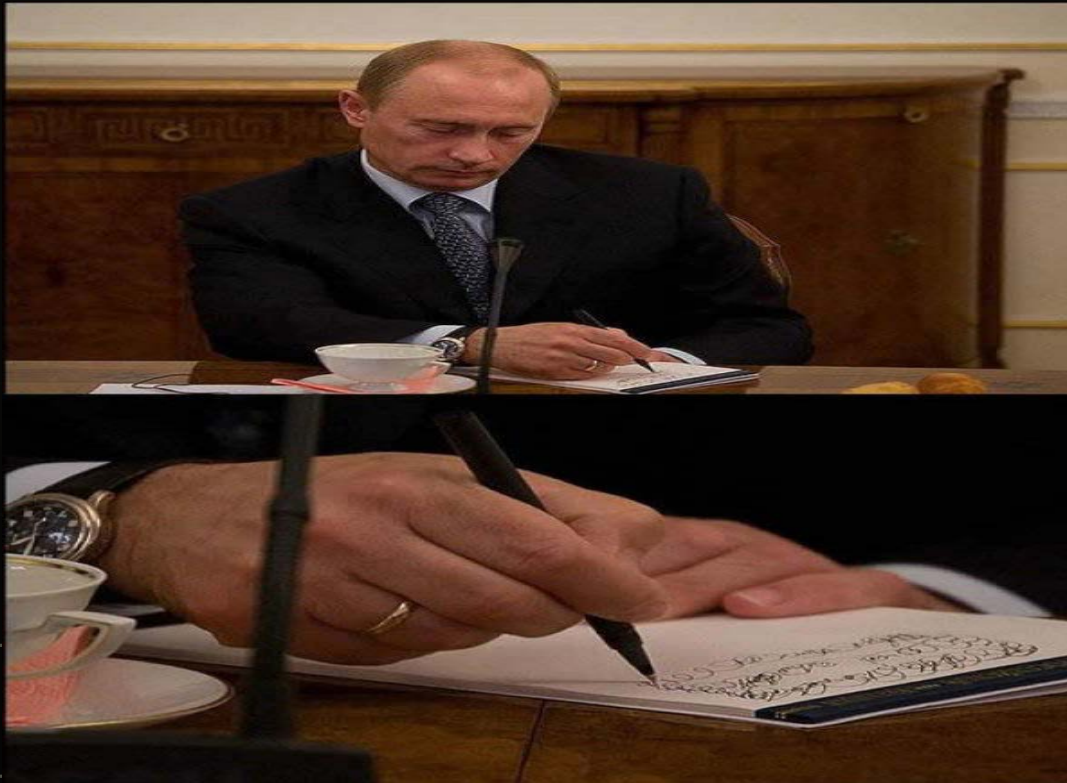
- had less board members relying on the superintendent for advice/input;
- had one member, other than the board president, stand out for taking a lot of time;
- and were not acting on policy items as much.



- There are tons of research out there on what good boards do, don't do, should do, average age, education level, occupations, average length of service on a board, etc.. The list goes on....

- Researchers will tell you it is hard to conduct research on boards, as our previous study showed us.
- Most of the studies out there are not researched based, even the Lighthouse Study you read about.

# Pay Attention



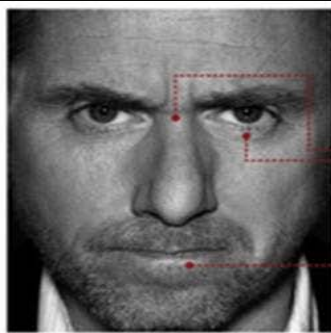
# Here is what we often see:



# How do you perceive these individuals?



# We see faces like this:



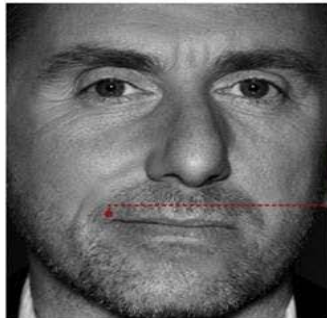
**anger**

- ① eyebrows down and together
- ② eyes glare
- ③ narrowing of the lips



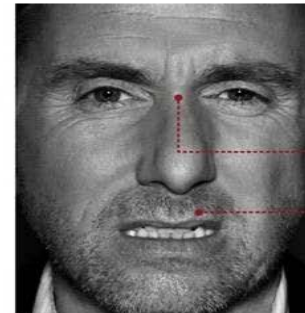
**fear**

- ① eyebrows raised and pulled together
- ② raised upper eyelids
- ③ tensed lower eyelids
- ④ lips slightly stretched horizontally back to ears



**contempt**

- ① lip corner tightened and raised on only one side of face



**disgust**

- ① nose wrinkling
- ② upper lip raised

# Things That Jumped Out At Us!

- Constantly blaming each other.
- Tempers flaring up.
- Everyone looking bored and tired.

- Numerous micromanaging agenda items.
- Not listening attentively.
- Excessive arguing.



- Little, or no, eye contact.
- Shaking heads negatively. (Can ruin a major change initiative).
- Rolling eyes.

- Negative facial expressions.
- Gestures– wave, point, etc..
- Voice- not what you say, but how you say it.

- More TRAINING is not the answer.
- Boards in low performing systems have to radically change the way they do their business.
- They have to GOVERN differently.

- Thus Behavioral Governance was born.
- What we do?
- **COACHING** is the only way to change behaviors. That's what we do.

- Initial Board Training- 1-3 hours.
- Video every board meeting to observe your behavior and performance.
- Can coach you to great things.

- **Key\*\*\*\*\***The most ineffective, and hard to deal with, board member is one who comes on the board with the intention of representing THEIR area. You have to represent the system, not one segment.

- Key quality of a great leader is TRUST. Same is true from the board. They must trust you.
- You get trust by being consistent over and over again.

- Stick to your agenda. It is your savior.
- Serve and act like you will be there only ONE term. That's where you will do your best.



- Clone your bright spots.
- Look for inch pebbles. (IBM)
- Great teaching is the cheapest form of school improvement. Any any program is merely supplementary and if intended otherwise, you will be sadly disappointed.

- Operational policies will NOT move the district forward, but leadership policies will.

**Boring people can't  
lead people.**

MY FINISHED FILES ARE  
THE RESULT OF YEARS  
OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY  
COMBINED WITH THE  
EXPERIENCE OF YEARS.

- Look at the ordinary and see the extraordinary. That's all it is.
- How can we make our work extraordinary

- How do you do extraordinary things?
- Double your failure rate.
- Ticket in your pocket.

- If you aspire to be only an *average* school board member achieving *average* performance and *average* outcomes, then going along with this will meet your needs and guarantee your mediocrity.

- "It is the board's responsibility to govern. Individual board members do not. Hence, a superintendent is bound by what the board says, but never by what any board member says. A board should pledge to its superintendent that it will never hold him or her accountable for keeping



- board members happy as individuals and will never hold him or her accountable for any criteria except those expressed officially by the full board."  
*John Carver*
- However, there must be a bond between the superintendent and board.

There is no magic pill you don't know about.

There are good strategies poorly executed, poor strategies executed well, but rarely is there a truly new, revolutionary strategy.

The issue is execution, not innovation.

# How Many of You Talk to Yourself?



- 60,000 thoughts per day.
- 57,000 of those thoughts are the same thoughts you had YESTERDAY.
- Difference in a RUT and a GRAVE.

- 95% of our thinking is turned over to our SUBCONSCIOUS.
- We turn things over to autopilot.
- When we are good, we tend to do that more often. Keeps us from being great.

- We aren't conscious of how we are delivering messages to ourselves day in and day out.
- WE EXPECT DIFFERENT THINGS IN OUR LIVES BUT WE ARE HAVING THE SAME THOUGHTS DAY AFTER DAY.

- Key-- change your thoughts.
- "What you believe is what you see."
- Need some MAGIC?

# 10 Laws of Great Board Governance: (Lee- AmericanSchool Board Journal)

1. LAW OF THE SHIELD.
  - Protects you from your critics and naysayers.
  - Stand together by locking your armor and working as a team.



- Don't have to vote unanimously, but do agree to support the majority vote. If you pull away from the group, CHAOS begins to rule.

## 2. LAW OF THE EGO

- Big egos sink ships.
- Keeps meetings from running smoothly.
- Egos must be checked at the door.

- If an ego gets out of control, the other board members must reel it in.
- Your ego is not your amigo.
- The bigger your ego, the less you can see.

# 3. Law of False Choices

- Great boards don't accept things at FACE VALUE.
- Refuse to accept things just because you are told, "we have no choice". There are always more choices.

- We see boards back off when they hear that.
- The big “WHY” question is your great equalizer.
- Great boards turn a no into their advantage

# 4. LAW OF HAND SLAPPING.

- Many great boards realize there are too many rules and regulations keeping them from achieving their goals.
- Most rules are designed to keep us in a "BOX".
- Real growth won't be found in a box

- Got to go outside the boundaries.
- Nothing illegal, but those things that are questionable and nobody seems to know why they are there.
- Stretching the limits will give you great results.

# 5. Law of Subtraction

- Remove those barriers that limit your progress.
- Subtract people not performing well and get rid of programs not working.
- You can't outwork bad leadership.
- Find out what works and focus on that. Focus on your strengths instead of constantly trying to fix weaknesses.



## 6. Law of Inches

- Great boards realize big results are hard to come by.
- Look for your inches.
- Create small successes rather than waiting for the home runs.

- Great boards find their inches because it helps them get through difficult times.
- Success comes in inches, not yards

# 7. Law of the System

- This is your board's infrastructure.
- Edward Deming said, "94% of the failure we experience is the result of the system, not the people".
- All great boards work from within a system of beliefs and performance

- This law prevents boards from constantly blaming others for their shortcomings.
- Your system is perfectly designed to get the results you are getting.

## 8. Law of the Shadow

- Law that brings issue out into the open.
- Many boards are caught up in the grip of a shadow.
- Things you keep in the dark, but they loom throughout the system.
- Shed light on issues everybody knows exists

- You will be powerless to make real changes until you face your shadows.
- Expose them to the light, and once this is done, you can move on and deal with the future.

# 9. Law of the Mirror

- This is the secret to successful board leadership.
- Each board member matters and each individual board member holds the key to the effectiveness of the group.

- What does each member do to contribute to the success of the meeting.
- Each member accepts responsibility for their own actions.



# 10. Law of One

- One board, many voices, but ultimately ONE VOICE.
- If you speak with one voice, you can survive any obstacle that comes your way.
- It is the life blood of any organization.

- Disagree all you want, but when you leave, leave with a combined purpose and speak the same language.
- Don't allow your critics to separate your voices.
- If they see a chink in your armor, you are doomed.

# When Behavioral Governance is Working:

- Seven Signs of a Great Board Meeting (Dr. David Lee)
  - The leader takes control and professionally advances the agenda
  - The meeting flows well and is productive
  - No one monopolizes discussions

- The majority of the meeting deals with achievement issues
- Everyone listens attentively when others are talking
- There are no visible signs of dissatisfaction with another member
- The public would take pride in the board accomplishments

# Tsunami Effect of School Reform

- ACCOUNTABILITY PLANS are here to stay.
- What do you see coming?
- Education is a \$700 billion market.

- Uniform Curriculum- Uniform Delivery
- No new ideas!!!
- Reform comes from within.



**OUTSOURCING**

**IN-HOUSE SOLUTION**

# The Big Lie!

*Congratulations*

*to the*

**PROFICIENT**

**Class of 2014**





- Experts will create your courseware for anywhere/anytime learning.
- Teachers as DISPENSERS of information will be like the DINOSAUR.

- We have to take something off your plate when more is put on it.
- 6 Initiatives
- No new statewide initiatives should be required until proven to work.

**Are you hoping this  
will be your best  
year?**

**Have a strategy!**





- What will you be remembered for?
- Me, too, leaders will fade away.
- Pepper Rogers

Never take your foot off the  
accelerator





A diagram consisting of a 2x2 grid of yellow lines on a black background. The top-left cell contains the letter 'a', the top-right cell contains 'b', the bottom-left cell contains 'c', and the bottom-right cell contains 'q'. The grid is centered on the page.

a

b

c

q



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