

BOARD CULTURE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

ACCBE KEY GOALS



Advocate & Amplify: ACCBE is solely dedicated to develop and advocate on legislative and policy issues for county boards of education, ensuring a unified and strong voice representing the unique interest of County Boards on issues impacting County Offices of Education.



Partnerships for Success: ACCBE is committed to building a strong partnership with the California Superintendent's Association, and coalitions with other allied groups to leverage resources and expertise in support of student success.



Engage, Elevate, & Empower: ACCBE builds leadership capacity within County Boards, fostering collaboration and peer support.



Forward-Looking: ACCBE focuses on innovation solutions to address the evolving challenges/changes in education.

PURPOSE OF SPECIAL TOPIC: CULTURE

To provide board trustees with examples of healthy cultures while providing space to discuss strategies and tactics for building culture on their boards.

Essential Questions:

- What are the elements of a positive board culture and how do you sustain one?
- How does board culture impact your commitment or ability to serve?
- What strategies / tactics can you deploy to cultivate and sustain positive / strong culture on county boards?

Objectives (TWBAT)

- Describe what positive board culture can be for their county boards
- Understand the risks of having negative cultures
- Identify strategies for maintaining a positive board culture

ICEBREAKER

In the chat or unmuted respond to one of the following questions:

- How many people are on your governance team?
- How would you describe your board's relationship with the county superintendent?

BOARDSMANSHIP 101

BOARDSMANSHIP FOR COUNTY BOARDS

Boardsmanship for a county board of education refers to the principles, practices, and skills necessary for effective governance by the board members. It involves a collective effort to ensure the board functions efficiently, makes informed decisions, and effectively represents the communities' interests in education.

Understanding the Boards' Role:

Board members need to grasp their responsibility as the governing body for the county office of education

Policy and Decision Making:

Board members must understand the importance of developing and implementing effective policies, regulations, and curriculum for the schools and educational programs operated by the COE

Budget and Financial Management

They need to be informed about the COE's budget, approve it, and ensure responsible financial management

Community Engagement and Advocacy:

Board members should actively communicate with the community about the COE's programs and achievements, and advocate for education on the local, state, and national levels

Collaboration and Communication:

Effective boardsmanship involves working collaboratively with the superintendent and other board members, as well as the community

Continuous Learning and Development:

Board members should continuously learn about educational policies, and best practices to improve their effectiveness



OPEN REFLECTION

What are some tactics, strategies or ways your or colleagues have showcased exemplary boardsmanship? If none, what can you commit to doing to set examples for your board?

ESTABLISHING BOARD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- ☐ Plan annual or biannual board retreats to restore relationships and address conflicts and concerns
- ☐ Conduct board self-evaluation to identify gaps in activities and relationships
- ☐ Complete StrengthsFinder 2.0 or another working style assessment to have common language for ways of working
- ☐ Plan a coffee date
- ☐ Go out to dinner with the board
- ☐ Attend a community mixer
- ☐ Establish mentor and mentee relationships between tenured and new members

CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF RESPECT

- ☐ Be an active listener
- ☐ Monitor your airtime and leave time for other members to speak
- ☐ Make inclusion a practice and priority for all members of county board
- ☐ Be mindful of body language and facial expressions during meetings
- ☐ Be conscious of technology usage during meetings (cell phones, tablets etc.)
- ☐ Be aware of your tone of voice, how you phrase messages and the words you chose when interacting with fellow members and the community

RUNNING EFFICIENT MEETINGS

- ❑ Setting group norms or protocols that all members agree to follow (provide examples)
- ❑ Create a scripts for key activities that the board manages (appeals, transfers, expulsions etc.) and for presidents to use when meetings are becoming disruptive
- ❑ Leverage parking lot to capture comments and questions that can't be covered
- ❑ Use periodic self assessments or surveys to evaluate board efficiencies and identify areas for improvement

REPAIRING DAMAGED RELATIONSHIPS

- ❑ Acknowledge the issue and harm done then work toward shared vision for relationship
- ❑ Have members experiencing conflict meet with the board president individually, then together to address concerns
- ❑ Have president and board members experiencing conflict meet with the superintendent as intermediary to redress wrongs and determine paths forward

OPEN REFLECTION

What would make following recommendations challenging for your board?

What pushback or reluctance do you anticipate experiencing from members or president?

Examples of when boards have done this successfully

BOARD CULTURE

WHAT IS BOARD CULTURE?

- A board's culture is defined by the unwritten rules that influence board members' interactions and decisions. These include the mindsets, hidden assumptions, group norms, beliefs, values, and artifacts (such as the agenda) that influence the style of board members' board discussions, the quality of engagement and trust among the board members, and how the board makes decisions.
- The culture can be influenced by the superintendent or the board president.
- A healthy board culture is recognized as an important element of board performance.

IS

Agreements for how board members should behave.

Ways of working that govern communication and decision making

NOT

Always clearly defined or understood; but essential to shape culture

Merely being “collegial” or “engaged.”

BOARD CULTURE STYLES



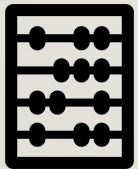
Inquisitive: These boards value the exchange of ideas and the exploration of alternatives



Decisive: These boards are focused on measurable results, driving a focused agenda and outcome-oriented decisions



Collaborative: These boards value consensus and having a greater purpose



Disciplined: These boards emphasize consistency and managing risks and prioritize planning and adherence to protocols

Open Reflection

- How would you classify your board culture?
- What examples can you provide?
- Can you provide an example of when your board adopts a specific culture style when discussing certain topics.

PRACTICING INQUIRY

A board...

- fully enlists differences of opinions
- fully enlists unique vantage points and areas of expertise
- asks deeply informed questions to gather strong collective wisdom

Sample Questions

- Do we have the right people in the boardroom?
- Are the most knowledgeable staff here to answer our questions and provide information?
- Are we structuring our discussions and assignments to focus on the right issues and activities and gathering input from all members?
- Do board and committee leaders model the desired board culture? Is there a process for modifying the agenda?
- Do board members consider how they are contributing to the culture?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A STRONG CULTURE

- Healthy and respectful partnership between board members, the board and the superintendent, and the board and the community
- Trust and openness between board members, the board and the superintendent, and the board and the community
- Thoughtful and productive resolutions of issues or disagreements between board members, the board and the superintendent, and the board and the community
- Willingness to address poor board behavior that is negatively impacting the board and its relationship with the superintendent or the community

BENEFITS OF A STRONG BOARD CULTURE

- Engaged and energized board members, superintendent, and staff
- Productive use of meeting time
- Own and support board decisions
- Embrace ongoing board development and growth

Main Goal: Better decisions that lead to better outcomes for students

CLOSING REFLECTION

What's one thing you learned today that you can commit to trying during your next board meeting?

CULTURE CHECKLIST FOR BOARDS

- ☐ New member onboarding process
- ☐ Planned board retreat
- ☐ Meeting norms and protocols
- ☐ Establish relationships with colleagues
- ☐ Conduct StrengthsFinder or another workstyle assessment
- ☐ Conduct a board self evaluation
- ☐ Have new council members upon taking office and all members review and sign the norms

Based on the information covered today and your experience, what do you think is missing from this list?

EXPERIENCE & TOPIC SURVEY

NEXT STEPS

- **“Starting Strong”** as a New County Board Trustee series May 5th
- **One-on-One “Coaching”** on demand for new Trustees and Monthly Coaching sessions for all trustees
- **Legislative Briefing** May 19
- **Quarterly County Board Gathering** for all trustees June 2, Sept 1
- **ACCBE Advocacy/Policy Committee**, April 30th.