

Vickie Ybarra Statement at First Reading of policy governance policies 12-12-06  
Yakima School District Board of Directors, monthly business meeting

Policy Governance is a form of governance that is increasingly being used by nonprofits and school boards around the country and in Washington State. Its been around for over 20 years, and was developed by John Carver in Atlanta.

Policy Governance rests on the belief that the School Board has an obligation to represent the community owners of the district. That we further have an obligation to spend time investigating the values of the community owners, and educating ourselves on what “skills, knowledge and abilities the children of our community need in order for them to be successful and productive and to contribute to the community after they graduate from our schools”. And then to reflect the values and what we’ve learned in determining the goals or outcomes of the district.

Policy Governance operationalizes our belief that the School Board speaks in one voice, or not at all, and that we provide instruction to the Superintendent via written policies. It provides a structure for work of the board, focused on assuring that the outcomes of the district are achieved for all students, while also assuring that inappropriate means are not employed to achieve those outcomes.

Members of the Yakima School Board have been interested in Policy Governance for some time. I myself have experience in Policy Governance from a national nonprofit board I sat on about 10 years ago, and was on that board when it made the switch to Policy Governance. Some of us have attended the Policy Governance sessions at the state school directors’ conference for the last couple of years. Over the summer we had formal board training with Connie Fletcher, a Policy Governance trainer/consultant who is also a school board member in Issaquah. We continued to read and research Policy Governance over the summer, then in September made the decision to move forward with implementing Policy Governance. We then held a 3-day training with Connie Fletcher here in Yakima, that was open to the public, November 30<sup>th</sup>, December 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. During those days we learned more about how to operationalize policy governance here in Yakima School District, and drafted the 1 Ends/Outcomes Policy, the 10 Executive Limitations Policies, the 10 Governance Process Policies, and the 5 Board-Superintendent Linkage Policies that we have on our agenda for first reading tonight.

It is our intent to finalize these for 2<sup>nd</sup> reading in January and immediately thereafter to move to operating as a Board according to Policy Governance. Although we expect it will take us 6 months to a year to really become proficient at it.

The Yakima School Board has for years operated according to many of the principles of Policy Governance, under the leadership that was in place. This move seems to us the natural next step in formalizing good governance for the district and ensuring the board stays focused on priorities. We don’t need to look far in this state to see what problems a distracted and disorganized school board can cause for a district, and we don’t ever want that to happen in Yakima. The time to do this is while things are going well, while the district is making strong strides in improving academic achievement, while the board is strong and functioning well. This change is an investment in the future strength of the district.