

The Board of Directors of the Yakima Public Schools met July 24, 2006, at Yakima School District Central Services, Conference Rooms A and B, 104 N. 4th Avenue, Yakima, Washington. This meeting was advertised as required by law.

Present were: Vickie Ybarra, President; John Vornbrock, Vice President; Martha Rice, Jim Scoggins and Walt Ranta, members; Sharon Surbrook, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent; and Connie Fletcher, Consultant. Benjamin A. Soria, Superintendent, was excused from the meeting for an out-of-town commitment.

President Vickie Ybarra called the meeting to order at approximately 2:37 p.m.

Study Session

1. Policy Governance Training

Connie Fletcher, Issaquah school board member and governance policy consultant, indicated her goal would be to give a broad overview of Policy Governance. Vickie Ybarra indicated the board has had some preliminary conversations and two board members have served on other boards using Policy Governance.

The training included: The new work of school boards is to assess community needs and expectations; set vision and direction, and assess progress. Policy Governance clarifies relationships between the owners to the board and the board to the superintendent. It defines the board's job by ensuring that the district achieves what it should by delegating expectations to the superintendent, checking to see that expectations are met, and providing direction to the superintendent that preserves board accountability and maximizes superintendent flexibility, creativity, and freedom. There needs to be accountability through clearly written policy that gives specific guidelines to the superintendent and provides a monitoring system. The board acts as a whole; instructions to the superintendent come from official board action, not from individual members or committees. In summary, the principles of Policy Governance were reviewed:

1. Board represents owners
2. Board speaks with one voice, or not at all
3. Instruct via written policies
4. Instruct no staff member except the superintendent
5. Ends differentiated from Means
6. Define Ends positively (achieve)
7. Define Means negatively (avoid)
8. Progressively set expectations (broad/general, narrow/specific)
9. May change at any time
10. Evaluate only against criteria written into policy

An opportunity for discussion and questions from the board followed. In Issaquah, two official meetings are held each month; Policy Governance items are built into the agenda one year in advance. Linkage and executive sessions are scheduled just prior to or following these meetings. A periodic executive report (two to three pages) from the superintendent, provided in information packets, gives updates and information; only action items are covered during the meetings. Updates are also provided through the monitoring reports. The board focus becomes the ends work, not the means work which is the responsibility of the superintendent. Three ways to monitor are the superintendent report, audit report, plus an outside, third-party monitoring consultant may be hired. Policy Governance meets both board and superintendent needs, plus community needs are met and staff members are able to focus on their jobs. The community is engaged as board members work to learn community values and represent community values in issues of importance to public education.

Ms. Fletcher recommended that if a board chooses to move to a Policy Governance system the following steps would need to be taken:

1. Learn the concepts (one full day)
2. Develop board policies (two full days)
3. Launch

4. “Link” with community to learn their values
5. Refine “Ends” statements
6. Monitor Ends and Executive Limitations

The board would need facilitation to develop the “ends” and the superintendent would need training on the monitoring.

Following the presentation by Connie Fletcher, Vickie asked for board deliberation to determine whether or not the board is interested in moving forward with formally adopting Policy Governance for the Yakima School Board.

Each board member had an opportunity to express their thoughts/concerns about whether or not to move forward at this time with formal adoption. Most board members expressed interest in pursuing formal adoption of the Policy Governance model; some concerns were expressed regarding the amount of work that would be involved in moving towards adoption. There was also the desire on the part of some board members to gather additional information before making a decision as to moving forward with formal adoption.

After further discussion, it was agreed that board members would individually gather additional information that they may need to help them determine whether or not they would like to see the Yakima School Board move forward with Policy Governance. It was agreed that the board will set aside a Friday morning meeting on September 22 to discuss and decide whether or not they will move forward with formal adoption of Policy Governance this school year.

2. Adjournment

At 6:10 p.m., there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Signature on File
Vickie Ybarra, Board President

Signature on File
John Vornbrock, Board Vice President