



YAKIMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

YAKIMA SCHOOL DISTRICT NUMBER 7

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TO: District Employees

FROM: Vickie Ybarra, Board President

RE: Policy Governance Policies - Yakima School District Board of Directors

In July 2006, the Yakima School District Board of Directors formally and publicly started down the road of moving our board operations to policy governance. Policy governance is a manner of formalizing board operations, including the board's relationships with the community, with itself, and with the superintendent.

Policy governance rests on the belief that the school board has an obligation to represent the community owners of the district. It operationalizes our belief that the school board speaks with one voice, or not at all, and that we provide instruction to the superintendent via written policies. It provides a structure for the 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.

While there is nothing forcing the board to adopt policy governance, we believe this is part of our responsibility to protect the future of the district. In the same way that we are asking employees all over the district to step up with their best, to think about their work in new ways, and to achieve excellence in their own area of practice, we believe it is our responsibility to step up with excellence in governance. For us, policy governance represents that excellence.

Although the school board engaged in unprecedented communication about policy governance in the months leading up to the planned adoption of our proposed new policies, we heard clearly at our February 13 business meeting that there remain substantial concerns regarding some of the proposed policy governance policies. Therefore, we postponed the planned approval of the 26 pending policies at our February 13 meeting. With much consideration since then, we have decided to proceed by adopting only a portion (11 of 26) of the policy governance policies that are on second reading awaiting approval at our March 20 business meeting.

Policy governance policies are divided into 4 sections:

1. Ends/Goals (1 policy)
2. Executive Limitations (10 policies)
3. Governance Process (10 policies)
4. Board-Superintendent Linkage (5 policies)

After reviewing the concerns expressed prior to and at the February 13 board business meeting, it is clear that most of the concerns the board has heard are around policies in Section 4, Board-Superintendent Linkage. Therefore, the board will pursue adoption only of those policies in Sections 1 and 3 at our March 20 business meeting, totaling 11 policies. Section 1 is the Ends policy – the goals

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of the district. Section 3 is the Governance Process – primarily how the board operates among itself (global governance commitment, governing style, board job description, agenda planning, board president's role, board member code of conduct, board committee principles, board committee structure, cost of governance, and process for addressing board member violations).

The 15 policies in Sections 2 (Executive Limitations) and 4 (Board-Superintendent Linkage) will remain on second reading, unapproved.

In addition, the board agreed we will take a number of steps to increase communication and opportunities for input on policy governance with the community in the coming months. We will:

1. Establish a board webpage of "board news" for electronic communication, which will highlight specifics of policy governance with all the policies posted;
2. Post board agendas on the district website as a method of communication, in addition to the method of distributing agendas that is now used;
3. Ensure that all future sessions with our policy governance consultant are scheduled to include late afternoon and/or evening hours to make them more accessible to interested employees/community members;
4. Present on policy governance and solicit input on the community linkage question from employees/community members engaged in the district's Roadmap revision process;
5. Communicate our plan to employees, offering to have board members available to answer questions on policy governance when invited; and
6. Hold an additional general community linkage session in May where we will invite any interested community member to come and answer the question we've been posing at our invitational community linkage meetings.

The board respects the fact that there are remaining concerns about policy governance, and we are committed to increased and continued communication to hear those concerns and address issues prior to final adoption. It is our hope that we can hear and address any remaining concerns regarding policy governance in the two remaining areas, Executive Limitations and Board-Superintendent Linkage, and approve the remaining policies in some form or another by Fall 2007.

Please feel free to contact me at my home email (vickie@ybarra.com) if you have any questions and concerns about the contents of this memo, where the board is on policy governance, or if you would like to request a board member to speak at a meeting to issues of policy governance.