

NEW SUPERINTENDENT UPDATES

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IASA is Hosting a Restorative Justice Workshop

IASA is hosting a workshop on the topic of Restorative Justice from 8 a.m. to noon on Friday, November 18, 2016, in the Columbus C/D conference room at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Presenters are IPA attorney Brian Schwartz along with representatives from three school districts. These districts are Crystal Lake, Carbondale 95 and Bloomington 87. Click [here](#) to register for this workshop.

I am really looking forward to this workshop as I have been hearing mixed reviews on this topic from both superintendents and principals as I work in schools this year. I recently read the book Better than Carrots or Sticks by Smith, Fisher and Frey. The authors relate stories and facts concerning restorative practices for positive classroom management. I have had limited exposure in my education career around the topic of restorative practices. It seems that many of these strategies have accounted for positive outcomes. I encourage you to attend this IASA workshop and hear what experienced restorative justice administrators have to say about the implementation of these practices as a result of SB 100.

Potential Trouble Decisions for Superintendents

Every superintendent, whether in a small rural town, suburban city, or urban setting will sometime in their career deal with a request from either a single board member or multiple board members for the school district to employ a friend, relative, spouse of a business partner, etc.... The best time to deal with this conundrum is to talk to the full board of education in open session before it happens.

A great place to have these discussions is during strategic planning for the school district. When discussing mission, vision and goals the topic of personnel is sure to be on the agenda. This is the time for the school board to state their desires for the employees in the school district. Do the school board members want the administration to recommend the best-qualified candidate for the position or the person who has local ties and connections?

The one suggestion I would offer for these difficult decisions is to pledge to at least interview local candidates and/or candidates recommended by school board members. This at least recognizes the input from individual school board members while at the same time allowing the administration to follow the directive of the above-mentioned strategic planning session.

Another factor I have learned with experience is that many times a highly qualified candidate from a totally different area of the state often returns closer to home at the earliest convenience. Thus, I have learned to give special attention to candidates who were raised in the general part of the state near the local school district.

During these types of decisions it is important to remember as superintendent you are the CEO not the owner of the school district. The board members are the elected representatives of the owners of the school district, the registered voters.

You can Observe a Lot by Watching

Yogi Berra passed away in September 2015. Yogi Berra was an American professional baseball catcher, manager, and coach who played 19 seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB) (1946–63, 1965), all but the last for the New York Yankees. One of Yogi Berra's interesting quotes is "You can observe a lot by watching." This is especially true when observing what is happening in your district's classrooms. I often suggest to teacher evaluators that they spend an entire observation just scripting what the students are doing. This gives the observer a very interesting and different perspective of what is happening in a classroom.

Danielson's "Engaged Learning" definition concentrates on what the student is intellectually doing in the classroom. I have written about this in the past but it is such an important concept it deserves further clarification and explanation. When an observer concentrates on the students and what they are doing it is much easier to script evidence related to this important component. In order for the student(s) to demonstrate intellectual work they have to be speaking, writing, and doing or in some way illustrating that they are thinking about the instructional objective of the class.

In my many observations of actual teaching, I often find that students working in a small group without the teacher present is some of the best evidence of "engaged learning." You notice I said "without the teacher present." Students work without direct teacher intervention often results in students answering other students' questions, students teaching other students how to do the work, students collaborating to find the correct solution, students choosing how to solve the problem, students researching for possible solutions, and generally students doing the work.

While the use of technology is not the only way to illustrate "engaged learning," properly implemented in a classroom, technology can certainly enhance this concept. In a flipped classroom video blog produced by an eighth grade Algebra teacher Katie Kimbar she talks about how this approach engages all types of learners in her classroom. You may view this video blog on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyDpsJ5nS74&feature=relmfu>. When you listen to Kimbar talk you can envision a classroom in which virtually all the students would be engaged because there is little whole group teacher centered instruction. Each student chooses how they want to learn the material and works at their own rate to complete the learning goal. This would be an example of an "engaged" classroom.

Dealing with Specific Board Member Requests

In the November 2012 issue of School Administrator, Richard Mayer, a California school board

member, writes in the article, *When a Board Member Asks for Special Treatment* how to deal with this issue. In this scenario, the board president calls the high school principal to communicate to the principal that he wanted his daughter to be enrolled in an honors course. Is this request a reward for being a board member or is it abuse of the position?

Mayer points out that if others find out about this favor it could cause lack of fairness and harm the principal's reputation. Mayer writes, "Once a board member's colleagues, constituents or district administrators suspect even a tinge of corruption, he or she has lost effectiveness as a school board member." Mayer's recommendation is for the superintendent to train and communicate to board members proper board etiquette, "...an essential (albeit unwritten) part of a superintendent's job is to prevent board members from behaving badly."

You might be thinking that this process of talking to board members about inappropriate behavior is easier said than done. However, it has been my experience that the time to address these kinds of issues is immediately. I agree with Mayer's suggestion to communicate to board members early about their proper role and responsibilities as board members. However, if situations like the one above surfaces in your district you need to address it immediately and directly.

In addition to special requests from school board members you will also probably receive requests for information on school issues from specific board members. I believe it is good practice to communicate to all school board members when one school board member requests specific information. For example, if one board member requests travel expense information for all employees I would communicate this request to the other board members and provide all the board members with the same information.

Tip of the Week

I had written previously about how to handle expenses at the Triple I (Joint Annual) Conference. Be sure to check your school district policy manual for policy related to reimbursement to school board members for expenses. If your school district follows the IASB Policy Outline, you will find your policy in Section 2:125. You should also check with your secretary and bookkeeper (business manager) about how board member expenses have been paid in the past. However, what happens now is under your watch and you should always do what is legal and supported by school board policy.

You will read in this recommended policy that the board has the power to advance its members anticipated "actual and necessary expenses" incurred in attending only those meetings listed. If you decide to advance expenses, you still need the school board members to turn in expense forms and receipts for all expenses required by law and/or policy. You may recall that in an earlier article, I had recommended that no alcohol be charged to the school district.

HB 4379 was signed into law in the last general session. I would recommend that you visit the IASB website at <https://www.iasb.com/govrel/alr9951.cfm> for further details. It looks like the law does not require compliance until January 1, 2017, but you should be aware of its details.

I was talking to a veteran superintendent recently who told me his board has decided to do a report of the sessions they attended at the conference at a regular school board meeting. I think this is a good idea to fully inform the public of the importance of school board member continuing education.