

Agenda Packets: The Best Tool in Board Decision-Making

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All board members get agenda packets prior to their meetings. Most are in an electronic format today, but there are still a few that are conveyed on hard copies or a blend of both. Regardless, while a person might argue which format is more efficient or environmentally more responsible, it is ultimately the content that is more important, rather than the delivery method.

Board agenda packets are the communication between a superintendent and board member containing information for board member consideration in advance of a meeting and/or possible action during a future meeting. In these packets, board members will find general information regarding the school district, programs, personnel, issues, etc., plus specific background information and rationale to support administrative recommendations on agenda items for board member consideration.

While many superintendents utilize multiple communication methods other than board agenda packets for general communication with board members, the agenda packet is

used almost exclusively for sharing administrative recommendations and background information for agenda items that will be addressed at the next board meeting. The background information is important, but equally important are the administrative recommendations. Board members expect their CEO's input on agenda items and, while any recommendation is subject to debate, board members value their superintendent's viewpoint. The superintendent's opinion and recommendations are key ingredients to effective decision-making in the board room. Superintendent's recommendations and input help to maintain the context for decision making and to keep the conversation on task to ensure that the right, best decisions are reached in a timely fashion to maintain the educational momentum in the district.

A well-prepared agenda packet will anticipate and answer most questions that board members will have, but board members should still thoroughly read their agenda packets as soon as they are available. ISBA recommends that these materials be available a minimum of two business days before an advertised

meeting. This allows sufficient time for them to ask any questions that might arise and for supplying additional information that may be necessary for consideration prior to the board making any final decisions. This is really important for complex issues, or when dealing with items where it is known or suspected that the board may be divided. Although some questions might arise just before or even during the meeting, most board member questions can and should be addressed and answered prior to the meeting. This allows questions and answers to be shared with all board members for their edification. This enforces the "what one member knows, all members know" rule and helps prepare board members before the meeting for their most important task which is, decision making.

The agenda packet is a crucial part of every board member's decision-making arsenal and should be consistently used to communicate vital information, objective rationale, and administrative recommendations for board consideration. Spending a sufficient amount of time in its development and devoting a sufficient amount of time in its review will help ensure that the board is thoroughly and adequately prepared to make the right, best decisions for their district.

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New ISBA Programs in 2019

We are pleased to highlight a handful of new programs and service that will be available in 2019 that we've been working on over the past several months:

- ✓ **The New (School Board) Member Academy** will include a sequence of clinic and webinar sessions that will provide an expedited training program for new school board members to achieve level 1 Certification Awards Program (CAP) status. The Academy commences with the first clinic session on January 22, 2019. New board members can still register to participate [HERE](#).
- ✓ **The Legislative Action Network**, a grassroots advocacy program, to actively engage local board legislative liaisons in advocacy efforts for the 2019 legislative session of the ISBA and bring school board members to Indianapolis for the First Annual ISBA State House Day on February 19, 2019. If your board has yet to designate its legislative liaison, please do so and send the contact information to Kayla Baldwin at: kbaldwin@isba-ind.org
- ✓ **Enhanced board policy services** will be coming soon to ISBA members and school corporations. While members will continue to receive a variety of services that have been included in membership, we will also offer an annual subscription for enhanced policy services that will provide detailed policy development for all required policies, manual maintenance and coding, customized policy creation, board training on policy development, and onsite consultation
- ✓ **ISBA 70th Anniversary Celebration** marketing and communications supplements will be spotlighted throughout 2019

These new programs, are a few of the components being driven by the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan adopted by the ISBA Board of Directors on June 15, 2018 (see [this link](#) to review the full strategic plan).

On behalf of the ISBA Board of Directors and Staff, **thank you** for your participation in the event offerings this year, giving us valuable ongoing feedback and sharing local perspectives on key K-12 issues, and for your service and leadership as a school board member in your respective communities. Together let's accomplish more great things for K-12 public education in 2019!