



AUGUST 2021

# e-Dition

## In this e-Dition:

**Finding Common Ground in Uncommon Times**  
by Terry Spradlin,  
[pages 1-2](#)

**Board Services**  
by Dr. Michael Adamson, [page 3, 6](#)

**ISBA Legal Services**  
by Lisa Tanselle, Esq.,  
[page 4](#)

**ISBA School Board Policy Services**  
by Julie Slavens, Esq.,  
[page 5](#)

**News and Links**  
[page 6](#)

**Dr. Adamson Retirement Announcement**  
[page 7](#)

## Finding Common Ground in Uncommon Times

By **Terry Spradlin**, Executive Director, [tspradlin@isba-ind.org](mailto:tspradlin@isba-ind.org)



With the start of a new school year, thank you for all that you are doing to fulfill your duties as school board members. I commend you for the leadership you are providing to your school community as the global pandemic persists and attention has been turned to school boards regarding COVID-19 health and safety protocols and other social issues. This public health emergency has proven relentless as COVID-19 related hospitalizations across the state this month are the highest they have been since January.

ISBA shared timely guidance to members via an email with several links to informational resources on Friday, August 13. In the email communication I shared, "I think we all agree that these are unprecedented, uncommon times, and we will only prevail if we can work together for the greater good."

The challenges and issues before us require patience, understanding, and determination to continue to make the right decisions for what is in the best interest of all students, even when they are sometimes unpopular to some. As stated in the ISBA Code of Ethics, school board members should maintain a commitment to the community by "earning the community's confidence that all is being done in the best interests of school children." A commonality that we share with our fellow

*Continued on next page.*

neighbors in our communities is that we are weary of the coronavirus and how it has changed our lives and daily routines.

We all want to keep students in school—in the classroom—to provide an optimal learning environment with their classroom teachers. An Indiana Department of Education memo to the State Board of Education this month showed that the mean Spring 2021 ILEARN proficiency rates of in-person students were 14 points higher in English/language arts and 20 points higher in math than students who spent most of the year learning remotely. To do this, you will be faced with making difficult, but necessary policy decisions on health and safety protocols.

### **MASK REQUIREMENTS**

One critical issue that persists is the issue of mask policies in schools and buses. As of last week, according to a survey from IAPSS, approximately 80 percent of school corporations have maintained a “mask optional” or “masks recommended” policy that honors parental discretion. However, some school corporations have had to shift to mandatory mask policies due to COVID-19 outbreaks of students and staff within schools. These districts are relying on expert medical guidance from the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), and its [guidance](#) issued on July 28, 2021, and local health departments or health commissioners. The ISDH guidance recommends that all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools wear a mask while indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS**

While board meetings have been disrupted in some communities, ISBA encourages you to have clear policies and practices for public participation at your meetings and continue to demonstrate civility and patience in accommodating public comments, while consistently enforcing policies pertaining to public comment. It is also important to give your community outlets to express themselves in ways that are meaningful to them. The Indiana School Boards Association shares the following memo on policy considerations and best practices to promote effective public meetings.

DOWNLOAD

### **CURRICULAR ISSUES**

Legal guidance from the Indiana School Boards Association on navigating curriculum and parent consent.

DOWNLOAD

### **ANSWERS AND INFORMATION REGARDING EDUCATION STANDARDS REQUIRED BY INDIANA LAW**

Letter and FAQ from the Indiana Department of Education with answers to common questions related to Critical Race Theory.

DOWNLOAD

### **SCHOOL DISTRICT EXAMPLES**

Examples of statements related to Critical Race Theory from MSD of Washington Township and Elkhart Community Schools.

DOWNLOAD

### **COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR K-12**

On July 30, ISBA issued the following summary of the back-to-school guidance released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Indiana Department of Health.

DOWNLOAD

# Board Services

By **Dr. Michael Adamson**, Director of Board Services, [madamson@isba-ind.org](mailto:madamson@isba-ind.org)



Part of ensuring that your board operates responsibly, effectively, and efficiently is providing opportunities every year for your own professional development. As an ISBA member, many of these services are available to you and your board at no additional cost.

## **Board Self-Assessment**

Regular evaluation and reflection are critical to maintaining the board's internal health. ISBA's self-assessment tool is a great way to measure your performance, both individually and collectively, comparing it to school board self-assessment data collected throughout Indiana. You can download the self-evaluation instrument from the ISBA website. This exercise is most beneficial when each member of your board completes the assessment.

## **Effective Governance**

Whether you are a young board or a seasoned board, training in the best practices of effective governance is always in order. This session can be conducted onsite, or virtually.

## **Conflict Resolution**

Are seemingly insurmountable conflicts between members of the board threatening to undermine the board's ability to fulfill its responsibilities? Is the Board/Superintendent relationship in need of repair? Do you have a board member who refuses to work within the appropriate channels and processes? If any of these are true, conflict resolution facilitated by ISBA can help you chart a clear path to resolving the differences and restoring harmony.

## **Maximize Meetings**

Effective board meetings are the result of intentional planning and execution. Learn how to focus the meeting agenda on what's important, avoid management minutiae, and spend more time addressing the big picture.

## **Board/Superintendent Relations Workshop**

Being a successful school board member requires a thorough understanding of the appropriate relationship between the school board and the superintendent. ISBA's Board/Superintendent Relations workshop shows you how to establish and then maintain a proper and professional working relationship.

## **Goal Setting**

Boards need goals. Goals provide boards with purpose. ISBA can walk you and your fellow board members through the strategic goal setting process.

## **Superintendent Evaluation**

The annual superintendent's evaluation must be more than a perfunctory exercise. This ISBA workshop will show you how to develop and implement an evaluation instrument that is meaningful, productive, and geared towards continuous improvement.

# ISBA Legal Services

By **Lisa Tanselle**, General Counsel, [ltanselle@isba-ind.org](mailto:ltanselle@isba-ind.org)



The ISBA Legal Services team is here to help our members navigate the thousands of laws, both federal and state, that impact public school corporations. Because school corporations are created by the state, and therefore school officials are state actors, it is critical that school board members and school administrators act in accordance with these laws when conducting school board meetings, creating budgets, hiring or firing employees, educating students, and regulating student conduct.

Our services are advisory and available to school corporations that are members of the Association. We also work closely with attorneys who represent school corporations as they serve a vital role in advising their school board clients on a regular basis. We can assist with legal research and advise of court cases on specific issues. While ISBA does not represent a school corporation in litigation matters, we have submitted amicus curiae briefs (or “friend of the court” briefs) on behalf of a school corporation when the issue (has statewide ramifications) is one that affects all school corporations.

We are members of the national organization, the Council of School Attorneys established by the National School Boards Association. Through that organization, we are familiar with education issues across the country and have access to written resources on numerous issues. We have created an Indiana Council of School Attorneys in order to connect school attorneys on a regular basis.

The Legal Services team also provides written materials to the membership. During this pandemic, we produced dozens of documents for members summarizing the evolving federal and state agency guidance on the coronavirus and the 60+ executive orders issued by the governor. Every quarter, we contribute legal articles to The ISBA Journal. On a regular basis, we issue memoranda on court cases and other significant topics, such as the new law permitting board members to participate in school board meetings electronically. Lastly, we have authored manuals on the topics of student discipline and employee discharge that provide in-depth information on the legal issues that must be considered when addressing these activities. The manuals include sample policies and sample forms for every step of the procedures that must be taken.

Another service we offer to our members is professional development activities. Every year we offer two law seminars that include presentations by expert attorneys on current legal issues. We also jointly host (with the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents) each year a seminar on collective bargaining issues. Additionally, we have produced webinars on the Open Door Law, the bargaining law, and student discipline matters. This fall we will release a webinar on employee discharge issues.

We are here to help newly elected/appointed and veteran school board members, as well as new and experienced school administrators and school attorneys in this complex area of school law! We are available by telephone or electronic mail on a daily basis to respond to our members’ questions. Do not hesitate to reach out to the ISBA Legal Services team.

For more information, go to [www.isba-ind.org/legal.html](http://www.isba-ind.org/legal.html)

# ISBA School Board Policy Services

By **Julie Slavens**, Senior Counsel and Dir. of Policy Services, [jslavens@isba-ind.org](mailto:jslavens@isba-ind.org)



Policy adoption is a top priority of any school board's governance responsibility. The policies put in place by a school board must comply with current Indiana and federal laws and should reflect the educational values of the school corporation and its community. ISBA provides your school corporation with professional assistance in monitoring and presenting information on new legislation, administrative regulations, and court decisions at both the state and federal levels. ISBA offers various services to its members relating to policy development.

## **Free Policy Services through ISBA Membership**

Through your school corporation's membership, ISBA provides legal review of individual board policies, answers questions related to policy development, and distributes sample policies on required topics and specially needed topics. In addition, you receive the ISBA Policy Advisor included in the ISBA quarterly publication, *The Journal*, and emails about required policy updates. The ISBA Policy Advisor addresses issues on relevant or current policy matters provided through legislation, regulation, and/or court cases.

ISBA has developed a required policy list of all the policies required by state and federal laws and regulations that is updated annually or on a more frequent basis as needed. ISBA develops and maintains a bank of sample policies of the required policies on this list. ISBA distributes its required policy list and sample policies upon request by its members.

## **Comprehensive Policy Management Service (Fee-based Service)**

ISBA also offers comprehensive policy development services through a yearly subscription that provides for customized services to your school corporation on policy development. The ISBA Comprehensive Policy Management Services (CPMS) aids in reviewing your school corporation's need for new, revised, or updated policies. ISBA will consult with your school corporation and evaluate your current policies to determine the necessary updates needed. ISBA also provides consultation services to determine if new policies developed by your school board are legal and to aid in organizing your board policy manual so it is easy for patrons and school employees to find policies in the manual.

Subscribers to the CPMS policy update service receive a quarterly policy update and newsletter called the CPMS Quarterly Report. This includes in-depth information on policy topics and contains sample policies on individual topics discussed in the Quarterly Report, including required policies.

ISBA offers customization of policies to ensure your school corporation meets required legal mandates and your local educational philosophy. ISBA also works with your school corporation to create policies on individual topics upon request. If a special topic or need arises, ISBA will consult with your school corporation and customize a policy upon request.

ISBA offers training sessions to ensure your board members and administrators are knowledgeable on the policy development process school boards engage in their policymaker roles and understand their roles in the process.

For additional information on the ISBA CPMS go to <https://www.isba-ind.org/cpms.html>. For more information on ISBA's policy services, go to <https://www.isba-ind.org/policy.html>.

(cont'd from page 3)

### **Developing Values/Beliefs, Mission and Vision Statements**

The values, beliefs, mission, and vision established by the school board are foundational to the overall success of the school corporation. These series of guided sessions are available for \$175 per session (a typical foundational statement process requires four sessions).

### **Superintendent Search Process**

Attracting and selecting superintendent candidates can be overwhelming. ISBA can make that task easier with our systematic search and selection services. We will assist school boards without compromising the board's authority in the interview and selection process. ISBA offers a cost effective, flat-fee package of standard services, with a number of additional add-on services available if requested.

### **Governance Questions**

Got a question? Give us a call or drop us an email! An important part of our job is providing timely information and guidance to assist you as you encounter issues in the performance of your school board member responsibilities. We know how stressful some situations can be and even more so if you are tackling problems or circumstances you haven't previously encountered. Remember, our goal is to provide you the governance tools you need to execute your board member responsibilities responsibly and effectively. Our primary aim is to provide that support to you, both timely and thoroughly.

For more information, go to [www.isba-ind.org/board.html](http://www.isba-ind.org/board.html).

## **ISBA in the News**

- » [Lasting Impact: Pandemic Changing Education Delivery](#)
- » [Hamilton County School Board Meetings: What To Know About How To Participate](#)
- » [Tears, Politics, and Money: School Boards Become Battle Zones](#)
- » [A Disturbing Trend: Disrupters at some Indiana School Board Meetings](#)
- » [CDC's Latest Mask Recommendation Prompts Mixed Responses from Indiana Schools](#)

## **FAST FACT:**

THE PERCENT OF INDIANA CORE 40 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN AN INDIANA COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY AND REQUIRED REMEDIATION HAS BEEN CUT IN HALF OVER THE PAST DECADE FROM 37% IN 2009 TO 16% IN 2019, ACCORDING TO THE MOST RECENT DATA FROM THE INDIANA COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.

64 Journal articles.  
28 e-Dition columns.  
21 AASA School Administrator articles.  
16 Fall conferences.  
8 Summer Conferences.  
2 New Board Member Academies.  
35 superintendent searches.  
Dozens of presentations at seminars, conferences, and workshops.  
  
Thousands of phone calls and emails.



Thousands of miles crisscrossing Indiana to meet with school boards.

The impact of Dr. Michael Adamson's tenure at ISBA will be felt for years to come.

Dr. Michael Adamson, ISBA's Director of Board Services, has announced his intent to retire on December 31, 2021, after 16 years of influential leadership. His level of dedication to support ISBA and its members is illustrated by the countless hours that he has spent in service to our mission and values. He has become a resource for board members in Indiana, along with board trainers across the country. We are sad to be losing such a great addition to the ISBA staff, but we wish him well as he moves forward.

To celebrate all of his years of service, Dr. Adamson will be recognized at Fall Conference on October 11th for his 15th year of service to ISBA and to receive our gratitude for his service to the Association. In addition, we will announce a date in December for a retirement open house to share our appreciation with Michael. Please keep your eyes out for an email about this upcoming event.

---

## Follow ISBA on social media!



Facebook



Twitter

*Terry Spradlin - Executive Director*

*Lisa Tanselle, Esq. - General Counsel*

*Dr. Michael Adamson - Director of Board Services*

*Julie Slavens, Esq. - Dir. of Policy Services, Senior Counsel*

*Brooke Orner - Events and Communications Manager*

*Adam VanOsdol - Communications Specialist/Content Strategist*

*Rae Anne Motsinger - Comptroller/Office Manager*

*Talia Bynm - Administrative Assistant*

