

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



From Panic to Proficiency: MSBA's Ongoing Commitment to Equipping School Board Members for Effective Governance

By Linda Leiding, MSBA President and Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial School Board Member

Panic is that overwhelming fear that strikes people in the face of real or imagined danger. Shortly after being elected to the school board, the superintendent explained the complexities of school finances. He showed me a one-inch-thick binder and indicated that each page represented a different fund category. The panic began to set in. However, after that, I attended MSBA Phase II training. The training significantly increased my understanding of the role of a school board member, good governance policies and practices, and school finances. While the panic did not completely dissipate, the class significantly improved my confidence as I assumed the role of school board member.

In Minnesota, MSBA is the go-to organization for school board members. One of its strategic initiatives is Board Development – empowering school board members to become informed elected officials and demonstrate an understanding of school governance. To meet the objective, MSBA provides numerous training opportunities that

address the role of school board members, complying with open meeting laws, and managing budgets and finances. Phase III provides insight into becoming a high-performing board. Phase IV provides guidance on policy and involving the community. Over the past few years, MSBA has added several additional opportunities for school board members, including the virtual Coffee & Conversation, the virtual Board Chair Chats, and its Third Thursday Webinar Series.

MSBA staff members recognize the need for ongoing board development to equip members with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective governance. They are committed to providing the training and information in the manner that best meets the needs of its members, including in-person meetings and classes and virtual options such as webinars and Zoom meetings. Over the next few years, MSBA will review all training opportunities to determine if there are gaps in the training and develop new opportunities to address the gaps. In addition, the MSBA staff members are embarking on

a plan to provide training in a manner that will continue to meet the needs of all adult learners.

Looking forward, MSBA is committed to continuous improvement and ensuring that all school board members are able to govern effectively. So, whether you are in your first term or are a veteran school board member, if you ever have questions or feel that tinge of panic, please remember that the MSBA staff members are there to answer your questions and provide information that will decrease the panic and increase your confidence to govern effectively. MSBA will continue to ensure that all school board members, regardless of their experience, have the tools and confidence to make informed decisions that lead to student achievement across Minnesota.

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