

Alignment and Balance

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If you have ever driven a vehicle and you noticed that it pulled to the right or left or had uneven wear to the tires? Perhaps you noticed that the steering wheel was off center or maybe you felt a vibration when driving. If so, the problem was probably with the vehicle's alignment.

The vehicle's suspension system connects the vehicle to its wheels and the proper alignment is achieved by adjusting the suspension system to assure that the tires are set at the correct angle with the road. Perfect alignment is dependent on three measurements, camber, toe, and caster and it is important to have your vehicle's alignment checked if you experience any of the misalignment symptoms. Proper alignment, when combined with tire balancing to compensate for weight imbalances in the wheel-tire combination, improves handling, keeps the

vehicle from pulling in one direction or vibrating when on the road, and lessens tire wear.

Most of us are familiar with the terms alignment and balancing when talking about our vehicles, even if we do not understand how a mechanic performs those services. But have you ever thought about alignment and balance from a school board perspective? How is the board's alignment with each other, with the superintendent, or with the community? Were things running well until the board hit a pothole, a circumstance or issue that so divided the board that it has not performed well since? Are one or more members commandeering center stage at every meeting, causing the Board to veer from its primary responsibilities? If so, then it is really time for an alignment and balance check before the problems cause catastrophic damage.

Begin by reviewing your school corporation's foundational statements, i.e., the corporation's value and belief, mission, and vision statements. Those guiding statements provide focus by stating what is esteemed most highly, what will not be compromised, the overall purpose for all school personnel, and what your desirable, future looks like. While these statements are for all school personnel, the school board is responsible for setting the expectations by utilizing these guiding statements for all board conversation and action.

School boards who are aligned with their corporation's foundational statements are in the best position to support the administration in student achievement initiatives, will realize greater community support, and will ultimately find more time to be attentive to those educational issues that reflect the culture and climate of their communities. It is true that school boards do not run schools, but school boards are to provide a governance framework that supports the efficient and effective operation of their schools by their superintendent. Utilizing foundational statements to stay aligned with what is most important and making decisions that effectively balance priorities are keys to successful governance oversight.

Reduction in the School Employer's Contribution Rate to TRF

by Lisa F. Tanselle, ISBA General Counsel (ltanselle@isba-ind.org)

One of the steps taken by Governor Holcomb and members of the General Assembly to increase monies available for teacher salaries was to appropriate \$150 million from the state general fund to the teacher retirement fund, and subsequently direct the Board of Trustees of the Indiana Public Retirement System (INPRS) to reduce the school employer's contribution rate to the teacher retirement fund. These actions were enacted as part of the budget bill passed this session and can be found in SECTION 257 of HEA 1001 (Public Law 108).

The General Assembly further mandated that all school boards identify the dollar amount of the reduction in their contribution rate and what actions boards intend to take with the money saved as a result of the reduction in the employer's contribution rate. These actions must take place at a public meeting held after July 1, 2019 and before October 1, 2019. This mandate is a one-time requirement since this section of the bill expires June 30, 2020.

Since the passage of the budget bill, the INPRS Board announced it had received the appropriation and reduced the employer contribution rate from 7.5% to 5.5%, effective July 1, 2019. Many school boards are now preparing for the required actions at a public

meeting. We have entertained several questions regarding this bill, and in particular, the need for the school board to pass a resolution. The language in the bill makes no reference to adopting a resolution; in fact the language merely states that the board, **at a public meeting**, must determine the dollar amount of the reduction and what actions the board intends to take with the money saved as a result of the reduction. A school board may choose to adopt a resolution as evidence of its compliance with this mandate, but the board could also choose to have the minutes of the meeting reflect that it identified the amount of money saved by the reduction of the employer's contribution rate and its intended actions with regard to the amount of money saved.

Additional questions have been raised about the specificity needed in regard to what actions a school board may take with the money saved. The language of the bill gives school boards complete discretion as to where the money will be directed. A school board may determine that some or all of the money will be used for a specific purpose or that some or all of the money will be directed to a specific fund. Clearly the intent of the governor and the General Assembly was to make more money available for teacher compensation, and ISBA encourages school boards to carefully consider dedicating

at least some, if not all, of the money saved to improve teacher compensation. While at this point there is no requirement to report to any agency what a school board did with the money saved by the reduction in the employer's contribution rate to TRF, because the school board is required to make these determinations at a public meeting, it may be that your area legislators or others are noting what actions your school board takes to improve teacher compensation.

