

Meeting Time: Too Long or Too Short?

By Dr. Michael T. Adamson, ISBA Director of Board Services

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I have often advised boards to examine their meetings to ensure that the time they spend addressing appropriate board business is not artificially inflated through patronizing conversations or comments that add little actual value to the meeting. That advice is not a challenge to see how brief your meetings can be. Instead, it is a recommendation that the board should focus on the real business of the corporation as a priority rather than an afterthought.

This is not a retraction of my position on meetings because, no doubt, meeting times can stretch far beyond anyone's ability to stay actively engaged. After all, "the mind can only absorb what the seat can endure," right? However, there is such a thing as not meeting long enough. If you look at the average length of your regular meetings and multiply them by the number of times you meet per year, the hard reality is that your board work is not a full time, or even what would be considered for most, a part time obligation. Consequently, when I hear of boards whose average meetings last well under an hour, I begin to be more than a little concerned.

I do believe in streamlining meetings by reducing redundant agenda items to consent agendas where possible, but only to allow more time for the items that really demand the board's collective attention. Even if part of the agenda is only a public review of material provided in board agenda packets, that can be value added for board members' understanding, as well as providing a sense of assurance from members of the community who attend board meetings.

You will never hear me criticize a board because they include community and student recognition items in their agendas; those are great opportunities to publicly honor achievement and show appreciation on behalf of the board and corporation. But if you spend more time on that agenda item than the rest of your meeting combined, it is probably time to reevaluate board responsibility. Are you collectively reviewing your financial health, curriculum, strategic focus, and policy? The key word in the last sentence is collectively. While you may be getting all of this information in board packets, we are not islands unto ourselves; you need to review these topics during your public meeting, not just when it is necessary, but also when it is prudent.

Boards are always accused of being rubber stamps for superintendents. Publicly engaging in meaningful review and discussion is a way to combat that misconception. The board has an obligation to be informed and to make sure everyone's understanding and opinions are not solely based on private interpretation. Having those intentional reviews and discussion will pay dividends, for both boards and superintendents.



EVERY HOOSIER CHILD COUNTS!

Indiana K-12 Complete
Count Committee

It is estimated that for every child aged birth through age 9 missed in the count, Indiana will lose about \$10,000 in federal funds over the next decade.

Each child uncounted may reduce funding for community schooling needs by nearly \$1,000 per year, for a decade. That's approximately \$10,000 per child missed. Depending on the age of the child not counted, this could be their entire public school career!

It is incredibly important that you take the Census survey and encourage others to take it by April 1, 2020 so Every Hoosier Child Counts!

Be sure to adopt our sample board resolution in your local school community and take advantage of all of the resources that we've compiled in our PR Toolkit #2.

Click [HERE](#) to see what ISBA is doing to make sure that **#EveryHoosierChildCounts!**

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