

Professional Development: Necessary or Not?

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Professional development (PD) in Indiana is optional for school board members. There is no PD minimum requirement or penalty for not enlisting in a specific number of PD activities. Of course, there are many board members that elect to be engaged in their own PD, both individually and as a board. Obviously, I am a proponent of professional development and more PD than just an annual self-assessment. Self-assessments provide a snapshot, a measurement that indicates where PD may be beneficial, but it does nothing to increase performance. Consequently, a self-assessment is just the first step.

My dissertation, completed in 2011, asked whether there was a correlation between school board members perceptions of their leadership and governance roles and responsibilities as compared to the amount of professional development (training) they had received. That was a risky topic since I was already working at ISBA. I certainly hoped there would be a correlation, but what if there was not?

The instrument used to measure board member's scores in six key areas of leadership and governance competencies was the Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire (BSAQ). Many of you are familiar with this instrument since it is the self-assessment instrument that you complete when you want to conduct your local self-assessment. (You can locate this assessment on the ISBA website at: <https://www.isba-ind.org/board-self-evaluation.html>.)

I measured school board members in three states, Indiana, State B, and State C. The results of the research revealed that State "A" (Indiana) "showed a significant statistical correlation between training and board members scores in three of the six competencies of the BSAQ. These competencies were: Contextual, Educational, and Strategic. State "C" showed a significant statistical correlation in two of the six competencies of the BSAQ. These competencies were: Interpersonal and Analytical. State "B" did not show any significant statistical correlation between

training and board member scores in this research" (Adamson 2011, p. 99). The absence of correlations does not mean that the training is insufficient or that it should be discontinued, but it does indicate where areas of training might be more focused to provide board members with information that directly contributes to their performance in specific competencies.

Interestingly, there were fewer correlations for State C, but participants in State C outperformed both Indiana and State B on their overall assessment scores in five of six competencies. Investigating further, there were little differences in the overall training offerings or frequency of offerings; however, unlike Indiana and State B, State C had legislated mandatory training for all school board members. Did that account for the higher scores overall? It is a great question and one that I hope future researchers will investigate further.

But for Indiana school board members, it spoke volumes about the benefits of training on board members perception of key competencies that contribute to effective governance and leadership. We selfishly hope that our members will predominantly rely on training opportunities through ISBA and to that end we work diligently to provide meaningful programs with information that directly translates into more knowledgeable board members who are prepared to be engaged in the work of their board. Still, there is much that board members can do as well by making a conscious decision to participate in a certain number of professional development activities, both individually and collectively, each year, whether through ISBA programs or an outside consultant.

Is professional development necessary? The research says it is, if you want to do your best work on behalf of your school corporation as you represent the best interests of your communities in public education.

Adamson, M. (2011). Effective school board leadership and governance: The impact of training and continuous education on self-perceptions of board competency. (Doctoral dissertation).



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FAST FACT ON INDIANA K-12 EDUCATION

US Census Day April 1, 2020

This year Indiana will receive about \$18 billion in federal funding, with approximately \$1 billion for K-12 programs (or about 8 percent of all K-12 education revenues when including all sources: local, state, and federal). It is estimated that for every person missed in the census count, Indiana will lose about \$10,000 in federal funds over the next decade.

