



WEATHERING ADVERSITY

By Kim Woodward, ISBA President



What season is this anyway? It was mid-June and I needed a coat. The rainfall was enough in a day to be the average for the entire month. Two days later, sweat poured down my back as humidity climbed to the high 90s, as did the temperature. With a dewpoint of 68°, it felt like wearing a wet wool blanket every time you stepped outside.

Anyone from Indiana knows if you don't like the weather, just wait a minute and it will

change. Leadership is like that, too. A warm, dry, sunny season of leadership can suddenly turn ominous. When board members face issues with discipline, termination of a teacher or administrator, redistricting, school closings, or funding struggles only solved through referenda, it's easy to become discouraged and forget that another season is coming. Ecclesiastes 3 says, "There is a time for everything and everything on earth has its season..."

AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW STRONGER

For me personally, one of the darkest times in my life came as a board member when my character was under attack by a patron who was intent on destroying our board for the sake of “change.” Sitting alone in the basement of my home, with shades drawn so that the reporter and cameraman standing on my porch wouldn’t know anyone was home made it hard to think of sunshine, lightness, and air coming in another season.

But it did come. Soon that season passed. And, my perspective let me view that adversity as a blessing: a way to not only appreciate good seasons, but also to see strength greater than I thought I possessed. Instead of wishing hard times didn’t happen, strong leaders know that, without adversity, we leave much of our leadership potential untapped. I wouldn’t wish adversity on you as a board member, but I do hope that you get the opportunity to experience and grow from it during your term.

BUILD MENTAL STRENGTH

I used to tell my daughters, “Be powerful, not powerless.” At times of leadership adversity, look for the ways YOU can be the one in control (your emotions, your outlook). Remember that everyone is looking at your leadership reaction which, in turn, will gauge their reaction. I hope my leadership never faces the challenge of leading a corporation through school violence or predatory behavior by a teacher or administrator. But, if I face that season, I hope I have exercised my mental muscles enough to have the strength to lead. Leaders who have endured that type of challenge relate that it requires control, calmness, and

consciousness of action best practiced during sunny and dry weather rather than during the tornado warning.

BE TRANSPARENT

...but not if there’s hail in the area! Leaders often fail because they fail to recognize where the public knowledge of a situation is and communicate from that point to what they know as leaders. It takes discipline and practice to be a clear communicator. The biggest area of opportunity is in telling all that you can, every time you can, as clearly as you can. Communicating with transparency builds credibility which builds trust that, even with bad or unattering news, nothing will be hidden.

MOVE FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE

During a descending tornado, would you stand and contemplate what fronts converged that caused its formation or would you grab your family and seek shelter? Many boards can get caught in talking solutions rather than taking solutions. Be the leader that challenges the process to start moving down a path of solution. We all remember Steven Jobs who revolutionized technology in countless way. When he was first described the iPhone to manufacturers, he told them it required pressure sensitive glass that only registered action through a human finger. Oh, and it needed to be developed in 60 days. Oh, and there needed to be a LOT of it ready for production. They scoffed. “Don’t be afraid,” Jobs said. “You can do it. Get your mind around it. You can do it.” And, in six months they developed and manufactured enough for the whole first run of the iPhone. Be a board member,

that challenges your schools to overcome through your fierce belief that they can do it.

IN THE END

It’s about preparation. Be prepared to lead in every season of school leadership and you will thrive as a board and a board member.



2019 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST 23
ISBA/IAPSS Collective Bargaining Seminar
Ivy Tech Conference Center

SEPTEMBER 30 OCTOBER 1
ISBA/IAPSS 70th Annual Fall Conference
Indiana Convention Center

OCTOBER 28 NOVEMBER 6
ISBA Fall Legal Workshops
(Regionally Held)

NOVEMBER 5 NOVEMBER 20
Regional Meetings
(Various Locations)

DECEMBER 11
ISBA December School Law Seminar
Ivy Tech Conference Center

For more information on ISBA meetings and locations visit our website at www.isba-ind.org