



THE ASPEN GROUP INTL, LLC.

A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

PEAK PERFORMANCE

Practical Strategies, Resources,
Processes, and Wisdom for Trustees
and their CEOs
March, 2007

Linda J. Dawson and Dr. Randy Quinn

Talking Points: What is this "Governance"?

Does the community and/or your "owners" understand what you have done with this movement into good governance? Are they questioning the time and resources expended to help your board to improve the way it does business? Are they scorning the need for your board to invest in its own good governance?

We have had several recent requests for "talking points" by board members challenged to explain the board's movement into Coherent/Policy/Strategic Governance. We hope these ideas may give you some assistance:

1. Our governance effort is about the board refocusing and retooling all systems, processes and practices to provide leadership for increased student achievement. **This is precision leadership that requires precision training and focus.**

2. The comprehensive model of governance that we have adopted includes work that formerly was unorganized, unfocused and required separated training by various consultants, meetings, and expenses. We have consolidated our work into **one body of work and focus that includes:**

A. **A thorough board self-assessment**, based on our written values on how we will operate individually and govern collectively as a single unit. We will self-evaluate regularly and according to our adopted annual calendar;

B. **A rigorous and accountable CEO evaluation** that goes beyond recent crises or personalities to a true evaluation. The evaluation of the CEO is based on organizational performance in achieving the board's defined End Results/Goals for students and day-to-day operation by staff within our written values which prescribe expectations and boundaries;

C. **Authentic site-based management.** Because our policies set direction and avoid micromanagement, every employee knows what is expected of them, how they will be evaluated, and the boundaries within which they can freely make decisions to achieve their job expectations;

D. **Board-driven strategic planning.** The End Results/Goals establish all organizational focus. The board and the CEO agree on annual performance targets that will define reasonable progress. Staff responds with their professional choice of strategies and action plans necessary to achieve annual performance targets.

"This is precision leadership that requires precision training and focus."

(cont'd, p.2)

SAVE THE DATE

• July 13-15, 2007

Reinventing Your School Board: Westin Mission Hills Resort & Spa Rancho Mirage/Palm Springs, CA

An intensive seminar on Coherent Governance for boards and their CEOs. Learn how to govern, lead and transform student achievement.

• October 11, 2007

Coherent Governance: The Way School Boards Were Meant to do Business

Sonnenalp Resort, Vail CO

A one-day basic primer on Coherent Governance for districts, members or CEOs new to CG.

• October 12-14, 2007

Wisdom Sharing:
Sonnenalp Resort, Vail, CO

Our annual symposium for practitioners of PG or CG: Focus: chair role; conflict mgmt; role play meetings

Register at:
www.aspengroup.org

Inside this issue:

Blazing ?	2
Talking Points cont'd	2
Sustaining a Legacy of Governance	3
RESEARCH STUDY	4

A **Blazing** Question: in the Real World

“Is the interpretation reasonable? That is the judgment. Adding words and fine-tuning diminish role clarity, board authority, and staff accountability.”

“Monitoring reports—what is our responsibility as a board and as members when we think we can improve the reasonable interpretation, add better indicators, or improve the quality of the monitoring itself? We don’t want to “meddle”, but some members think a better job can be done”.

Walk through this checklist:

1. Is the policy clearly written? Do you have more policy work to do?
2. Is the interpretation reasonable? Has due diligence taken place evidencing that quality thought, effort and work have been undertaken to present back to you a *reasonable interpretation* of your written values? That is the judgment. Adding words and fine-tuning diminish role clarity, board authority and staff accountability.
3. Do the indicators match the interpretation? Are they authentic, valid, reliable to measure the policy value? If the CEO knows the organization needs more or different indicators, has s/he identified a timeline for obtaining them?
4. Be the judge! Motion to accept, second, discussion, possible amendments, vote on the motion. Provide clear and unambiguous majority direction, as a single unit, to the organization. Judge operations: in or out of compliance (forget the confusion of partial and substantial). Judge reasonable progress on End Results: yes, or no, or yes with exceptions noted.
5. Be willing to get out of the “I would prefer” and “I would like my colleagues to consider this language” mode. Your creation of language was done when the policies were written. Now it’s time to go for a vote. ■

Fellow boards doing GOOD WORK with the

ASPEN GROUP

Horry Co, SC

Fairfax Co, VA

Racine, WI

Columbus, OH

Mercer Is, WA

Durango, CO

Palm Springs, CA

Newark, NY

Trenton, NJ

WA Govt. Entity Pool

Chetek, WI

Adelanto, CA

Eden Prairie, MN

Oakland, CA

Chetek, WI

Talking Points cont’d:

E. Drives Systemic Alignment, K-12. The power of a clear governance model is that it ensures articulation from site to site, grade to grade, classroom to classroom because every staff member is responsible for their “piece” of progress toward the End Results;

F. Involves the Community. Board members identify one of their primary jobs as connecting with the whole and subparts of the “owners” of the district. Dynamic dialogue and partnerships evolve to assure that board trustees know and work with diverse community members, and their expectations and concerns. Usually, defining how the board will proactively engage community/parents/students in focusing on student achievement is hit or miss, stop and start. This board has defined topics, audiences and forums for a continuous feedback loop to engage everyone in increasing student achievement and to build moral and fiscal support necessary to public education. ■

Palm Springs in July? Are you kidding?

Well, no, we’re not!

Our July 13-15 conference explores our new *Coherent Governance* model and offers participants the opportunity to learn in one of the California desert’s finest resorts ... at rock-bottom and off-season rates.

Come find out how *Coherent Governance* differs from *Policy Governance*®, and how much of the “double-negative” language is eliminated. (www.aspengroup.org) for details or call to receive a printed conference announcement. ■

Create a Sustainable Legacy: Good Governance

Election time rolls around. How does the board create a sustainable legacy of excellent governance? How does it build a team committed to governing? Where does it begin? At the beginning! This is a rough outline of work we did for and with the Aspen, CO school board:

Step 1: Identify community members to run who can:

- Work as a team
- Understand board work through policy
- Desire to make a governance-level contribution

Identify community members to run who desire to make a governance-level contribution.

Step 2: Host an Orientation Meeting for Interested Citizens (1.5 hours)

- Provide a governance overview and follow-up Q&A. Provide a FAQ sheet on your governance method
- Provide a copy of board governing policies
- Provide a list of board members and central office administrators: phone, email addresses
- Overview time requirements and meeting schedule/frequency by reviewing your annual calendar

Step 3: Host an Orientation Meeting for Declared Candidates (3 hours)

- Overview of Governing Policies: Why CG/PG/SG?
- Overview agendas – how organized, focus on achievement
- Provide general district information: annual report; demographics; budget; strategic plan
- List of Web links, FAQs, and resources for further research

Step 4: Provide New Board Members' Training

- Schedule: Personal interface with key administrators
- Review all board processes, identify support personnel for board, assign mentors
- Review applicable state and federal laws and provide list and definition of education acronyms
- Provide for discussion on current issues and challenges

Step 5: Retreat for Team Building with New Board/Top Administrators (2 days)

- Day One: Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- Round table work: Why did each of you run? What do you hope to accomplish/contribute?
- Sustaining community contacts: Linkages
- Thorough review of Results monitoring reports/annual targets & discuss trends in achievement
- Day Two: Detailed review of each policy – reaffirm values, language, identify changes
- Re-align annual calendar for the coming year
- Review monitoring processes and superintendent's evaluation cycle/report■

RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE IMPACT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Has Policy Governance® or Coherent Governance Made a Difference?

We want to know. We very much would welcome receiving whatever comparative data your district can provide showing whether or not a change in board governance corresponds with any improved student achievement results.

While it may be difficult to prove a cause-effect relationship between the two, if the trend line among a number of boards and districts that have taken this journey into good governance moves decidedly in a positive direction, we may have the underpinnings of a more sophisticated study.

Send us what you have. We intend to publish the results, once we have enough data to make the case.

One of the chief motivators for school boards to move into the practice of either Policy Governance® or Coherent Governance has been to allow—perhaps even force—the board to spend more time focusing on student achievement.

If that is the case, it seems reasonable to expect that as a result of the board's having focused its own attention, and that of the organization, on student outcomes, achievement would have improved over the levels recorded prior to the governance conversion.

Superintendents/Board Members: Please send executive summaries of your data analysis and conclusions for any of your End Results or Goals since your adoption. We'll summarize the data and be back in touch. ■

THE ASPEN GROUP INTERNATIONAL, LLC

A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

P.O. Box 1777 Castle Rock, CO 80104 USA

PH: 303.478.0125 or 303.882.9888

FAX: 208.247.6084

EMAIL: aspen@aspengroup.org

www.aspengroup.org

Linda J. Dawson and Dr. Randy Quinn founded The Aspen Group International LLC in 1993 following careers that combine to total over 50 years of service to education and other non-profit and corporate Boards. They work with clients across the United States, in Malaysia and Singapore, Asia and Africa, as well as clients from Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Linda and Randy serve as consultants and coaches to governing boards and their senior staff in creating and sustaining good governance and leadership. Their work centers primarily in Policy Governance, but includes other services as well:

- **Complete CG services: overview seminars, custom projects, implementation training, sustained coaching, linkage training and consulting, networking with fellow practitioners;**
- **Board and executive coaching;**
- **Strategic governance projects and planning;**
- **Individual leadership and team development;**
- **Community engagement training;**
- **Team building and conflict management.**

Aspen clients include school districts, city councils, insurance pools, associations, cultural/civic & religious organizations, governmental agencies and for-profit corporations.