



Facilitating Board Meetings What's Your Role?

One question posed to me while attending the SECA conference in Savannah, was how to facilitate a Board meeting. Dr. Joanna Grymes, Dr. Zelda McMurtry and Dr. Tonya Fillippino did an excellent job of answering this question at the Train the Trainers session. For those of you that had to miss it, here are the highlights.

Your responsibility as a facilitator is to summarize and integrate the information and discussion for the Board. You are the "vibes watcher". if you will, you are in charge of reading facial cues and body language—those subtle cues which may be easily missed.

Understanding and following the ground rules are something you are accountable for. Part of your role is to be the process steward by measuring the member's understanding, making participants feel safe and keeping everyone at the same place.

You are responsible for making sure that everyone has a voice. Every Board has talkers and listeners. Solicit involvement from the quieter participants and make sure that everyone that wishes to speak has the opportunity. Stop dominant people by whatever method works best for you.

You are responsible for setting the ground rules. Some good rules to

consider:

- ⇒ Maintain one focused conversation.
- ⇒ Share the air time.
- ⇒ Each member must take responsibility for him/herself and the group.

If you, as facilitator, prepare for the meeting, you'll increase the quality of decisions that the group makes, help to enhance relationships among Board members (building that team), achieve group collaboration and harmony and decrease the amount of time that it takes to get things done.

As you move forward in your role as Board President or leader there are:

Four Important Principles to Remember

- As facilitator, you are the servant of the group.
- Plan ahead and work outside the meeting.
- Help each person to be heard.
- Always be cognizant of common ground and reflect it back to the group.

Source: *Train the Trainer, SECA Conference, January 2011*

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Succession Planning: Board and Membership Retention

Prior to the SECA Conference in Savannah, we surveyed the state affiliate leaders to ask what each state was doing to maintain membership and to recruit effective Board members.

Here are some of their answers.

- ◆ Create a mentor program to ease the transition for new members and Board appointees.
- ◆ Recruit members to serve on committees before they are elected as a Board member. This will give them a sense of the Board functions and they will have an opportunity to meet Board members before they begin to serve.
- ◆ If you want teachers and practitioners to become members and serve on the Board, you

have to reach out to this group and schedule your meetings at a time that they can attend.



Our SECA Fossils—past Board members who are now paving the way for new members and new leadership for the organization. Does your affiliate take advantage of the wealth of expertise and knowledge that these members in your state possess?

- ◆ Invite a diverse population to serve as Board members and provide training.

◆ In order to get members to “buy in” to the organization, you might consider playing up the professional recognition, professional discounts for conference, workshops, training and materials.

◆ Find ways to make the Board useful to the membership. Some will serve for the professional recognition, others want to be current on early childhood issues, practices and research.

◆ Try to invite potential leaders to each meeting. Ask local affiliate leadership to become a part of the state Board.

Source: Affiliate Leadership Survey, 2010

Facilitating Board Meetings/Dealing with Conflict

Dealing with conflict can be difficult. All Boards can become “blocked” or polarized. As a facilitator, you have a crucial role in helping members to move on.

You should always assume good-faith, positive intent and respond to the participants with respect and thoughtfulness. One technique is to act as an ally of the person with the concern.

Ask questions and always analyze the origin of the concerns in help-

ing to solve the problem. Engage people with concerns in helping with the solution to the problem.

If the concern is not resolved and the time for the meeting is exhausted, you have some options.

- ◆ You can suggest that the concern/issue be placed on the next meeting agenda.
- ◆ You can send it to committee.
- ◆ You can choose to mediate the solution.

◆ You may decide to discuss the issue during break or outside the meeting if it does not involve the entire group.

◆ You can elect to lay down the item, table it, and agree to disagree.

Source: Train the Trainer, SECA Conference, January 2011

The Responsibilities of Non-profit Boards

Each year, you welcome a new group of leaders to your affiliate Board of Directors and ask the questions:

- ♦ What are the roles and responsibilities of a Board of Directors?
- ♦ How should the Board and staff (if you have paid staff) interact and what is the Board's responsibility in regard to managing that staff?

According to the publication, *Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards*, there are some commonalities in Board responsibilities for all organizations.

Determine the organization's mission and purposes. As Board members, you represent the members of the organization and are responsible for ensuring that the organization's programs and priorities reflect the mission of the organization as determined by its membership. All organizations should have a mission statement that clearly reflects what it stands for and wishes to accomplish.

Select, Support and Assess the Performance of the Chief Executive The Board is responsible for hiring the staff leader of the organization and for ensuring that this person carries out directives and programs as outlined by the Board. This applies to a business manager just as it does to an Executive Director.

Ensure Effective Organizational Planning The Board, in conjunction with the staff, is responsible for determining the most effective organizational structure for the Association and for long-term strategic planning. This includes succession planning as outlined in the article on page 2. You won't find one model that fits all organizations, so good planning is essential.

Ensure Adequate Resources and Manage Them Effectively The Board is responsible for ensuring that funding is adequate to meet the objectives of the organization. Each year the Board should adopt an operational budget prior to the fiscal year that incorporates resources adequate to carry out the mission of the organization as defined by the Board. For many Boards, this means hard choices about which programs to implement and how to spread resources as effectively as possible throughout those program priorities. Individual Board members should also closely monitor monthly financial statements and a review or audit should be conducted at least every other year to complete Board oversight.

Determine, Monitor, and Strengthen the Organization's Programs and Services Is your organization meeting its mission? Are you meeting the needs of your con-

stituents and members? There are a variety of ways to assess the effectiveness of the organization and this ought to be a yearly function of the Board.

Enhance the Organization's Public Standing You are the public face of the organization and how you present yourself and the organization impacts how others regard the association. You are responsible for connecting with your members and helping to reflect their concerns at the Board meeting.

Ensure Legal and Ethical Integrity and Maintain Accountability You are responsible for ensuring that all reporting to the IRS is completed each year in order to maintain your non-profit status and that the organization maintains complete fiscal and program records. You must also ensure that your organization meets all applicable local and state regulations. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that adequate organizational policies and procedures are in place and clearly articulated.

Recruit and Orient New Board Members and Assess Board Performance No one should be on a Board forever and transitioning leadership ensures a vital and effective organization.

How is your Board doing?

Some Resources For Non-Profit Boards

Ingram, Richard. *Ten Basic Responsibilities for Nonprofit Boards*, Washington D. C.: Board Source, 1996, 26 pages.

Gallagher, B.J. *Getting Good at Communicating*, Flower Mound, TX: The WALK THE TALK Company, 2010, 32 pages.

Gallagher, B.J. *Getting Good at Getting Along*, Flower Mound, TX: The WALK THE TALK Company, 2010, 32 pages.

Websites: www.boardsource.org and www.walkthetalk.com



Your SECA Board of Directors



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*Promoting Quality Care and Education for
Young Children and Their Families*

www.southernearlychildhood.org

The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:

- *Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- *Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*
- *Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families.*

SECA is a "Voice for Southern Children"

Is Your Conference Changing to Meet New Challenges?

Annual conferences can become the "same old thing" without some visionary leadership and a willingness to change to meet new needs. Innovation is the key and early childhood education is not alone in needing to innovate to attract the members of the future.

Smartmeetings is a magazine that provides information to professionals who are responsible for designing and implementing meetings and conferences. According to an article in the August 2008 issue of the magazine, there are *7 Rules for Innovative Conferences*.

Rule 1: The experts at your conference are in the audience, not on the stage. Audience members bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the meeting.

Rule 2: Think Return on Investment.

Are the time and resources invested in the meeting providing a positive outcome for the organization or is it just "something we've always done"?

Rule 3: Differentiate between the theme of your meeting and the learning objectives. What results do you want to achieve and how will they be achieved?

Rule 4: Learning objectives drive the design of your content. How do you want participants involved? Make sure your speakers deliver the content that you desire.

Rule 5: Always use the brainpower of an audience to create something. Have you considered a brainstorming participatory event instead of the standard keynote presentation? If you have a keynote, could it be designed to give audience members participation time?

Rule 6: Put structure into your networking and mingling opportunities. Sometimes, just "meeting and greeting" is all you want to accomplish but there may be other times that you could use these networking opportunities to achieve some organizational goal.

Rule 7: Assume that your participants have weak skills for participating in a conference. Help attendees figure out how to use their time productively. Are there tools that you can provide to help participants get more out of the conference experience? SECA is known for its hospitality and willingness to assist "first-time" attendees in learning how to navigate the conference, but we're always looking for new ways to make the experience more meaningful.

Source: www.smartmeetings.com