

SBAE Helpdesk



School Boards for Academic Excellence's new Helpdesk program is designed to support our partner organizations by providing one-on-one consultations to school board members in your network. If your organization already provides such support, the SBAE Helpdesk can be used as a supplementary resource, and if it does not, you can offer this service as a benefit to school board members in your network.

Consultations are led by SBAE Director of Network Engagement Jon Russell, drawing on his experience as a former Chief of Staff in one of Virginia's largest and innovative school divisions, Senior Advisor to Gov. Glenn Youngkin's Department of Education, and a longtime Town Councilman.

Jon is available to advise your school board members on any emergent needs, as well as the programs listed below.

To use the SBAE Helpdesk, simply email Jon at JON@SBAENETWORK.ORG and introduce him to your school board member in need of our help. He will take it from there!

GOVERNANCE STRATEGIES

Strong, reformist school boards are built on a solid foundation. Implementing a few simple changes to the structure and operation of the board, itself, lays that foundation and empowers reformers to make necessary change. SBAE's governance consultation also prepares members for school board meetings with resources and guidance on parliamentary procedure, best practices for meeting structure, keeping the meeting minutes, curriculum identification, school visitations, and public comments.

SUPERINTENDENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The greatest authority in any school district is the majority vote of the school board, yet many superintendents and administrators routinely undermine their authority. SBAE prioritizes the voice of citizens and their elected representatives on the school board, empowering them to fulfill their duty and improve student outcomes. We can help with superintendent evaluation, incentive structures, and finding a replacement.

SETTING SMART GOALS

SBAE arms school board members with strategies establishing Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound goals. Setting clear and realistic academic goals sets the stage for accountability and meaningful reform. Very few districts have goals that meet these standards, but yours can if you have the tools to assess and set them effectively.





COALITION-BUILDING TIPS

How do you build working relationships with colleagues who come to the position with bias, political bent, different life experiences, and different constituencies? The answer is by finding common ground and identifying the most urgent areas for improvement in the district. Many academic issues cut across party lines, and forging relationships on these issues will open doors for other reforms in the future. SBAE will help you plan your communications with stakeholders, identify areas of strategic agreement, get your issue on the agenda, and ultimately change policy.

GUIDANCE FOR FINDING LEGAL COUNSEL

School board attorneys tend to be very risk averse and often are aligned with administrators who may not share your convictions to make meaningful change. Finding an attorney who will think creatively to overcome legal hurdles and challenge the status quo is difficult. If your district is wrestling with Title IV or X, labor issues, public records requests, or other thorny legal issues, you need an attorney who is on your side. SBAE has experience replacing counsel and a broad network of allies who can make referrals for your specific challenges.



POLICY WRITING AND ANALYSIS

SBAE's expert policy team can create new policies and analyze existing policies. Our bank of existing model policies covers a wide range of academic, personnel, discipline, parental rights, and other issues. There are good policies that are proven to improve student outcomes, and SBAE can share them with you, help you tailor them to your district, and set standards for implementation and accountability.



CONSULTANT MANAGEMENT

SBAE's network of school board consultants includes experts on budget reform, resource management, labor, curriculum, pedagogy, discipline and safety, academic assessments, board cohesion, staffing, legal, and other issues. If your district needs outside help, we can help you find a partner that shares your values and vision, and we can advise you on how to manage them to maximum effect.