



## MASTER BOARD PROGRAM MODULE DESCRIPTIONS

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### **The A+ Plan for School Boards: How School Boards Impact Student Achievement**

Student achievement is at the core of every decision a school board member makes. In this session, the leadership team reviews from an historical perspective how the concept of student achievement has changed through the years. Next, the leadership team is challenged to develop a definition of what student achievement “looks like in the school district.” Team members are introduced to terminology frequently used when student achievement is being discussed. This module ends by focusing on research (Iowa Lighthouse Study #2) that was conducted by the Iowa School Boards Foundation concerning specific knowledge and skills that school board members need to lead their school districts to high student academic achievement—set clear expectations, create conditions for success, hold the system accountable to the expectations, build collective will, and, learn together as a board team.

### **The Challenges of Leadership**

Public education is currently facing many challenges and negative criticism. Its leaders are being pressured for quick improvements to systemic and societal problems that appear to be causing students to fail academically. What characteristics do successful leaders in education exhibit? Leadership begins with the individual and a leadership team’s effectiveness rests directly on the abilities of each person who serves on the team. If each team member leads with integrity, authenticity, and competency, the school board can have a direct impact on the school district. The challenges of leadership have been identified in a book entitled *The 18 Challenges of Leadership – A Practical Structured Way to Develop Your Leadership Talent* by Trevor Waldo and Shenaz Kelly-Rawat. The session identifies and describes these eighteen (18) challenges with an emphasis on the challenges of “reality, insight, internal compass, and bigger and bigger.” Various team assessments are included in the session activities to determine the team’s effectiveness on several leadership dimensions.



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### Change and Turnaround That Works

Change is fundamental in any organization. Times change, expectations change, society changes and the needs of children change. Smart districts anticipate change and plan for it. Leaders recognize the necessity to get ahead of the oncoming change and to meet the challenges in an organized manner. In this training, the governance team investigates the role education plays in the future of the United States' ability to maintain a competitive edge in a global economy, explores national and global trends that will impact public education, explores the core standards and the possibilities of change, examines "best practices" that support successful change implementation and re-imagines education in their district, including identifying actions the governance team must commit to in order to support change and turnaround in the district.

### Conducting Effective Board Meetings

During this session, the leadership team has an opportunity to connect the importance of good meetings to achieving highly effective governance in the school district. Florida Statutes governing regular school board meetings are examined in addition to provisions for special and emergency meetings; requirements of the Sunshine Law are also covered. In this session, the governance team evaluates current practices to determine any gaps in policy, procedure, and practice as it relates to the effectiveness of conducting the business meetings in the district. Also, an examination of the board's process for creating an agenda takes place. Samples of agenda shells and policies regarding school board meetings from Florida school districts are shared. The session concludes with scenarios concerning the ethics of school board meetings.

### Core Beliefs

This session is comprised of several interactive exercises that are designed for leadership team members to discover and identify: *1) their personal values; 2) the team's core values; and, 3) the team's core beliefs relating to the governance and culture of the school district.* Personal values are implicitly related to choice and guide decisions that are made by individuals who are members of the leadership



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team. These personal values develop early in life and may be resistant to change. Organizations such as school districts also subscribe to a set of core values that are largely shared by members even though each member's personal values may not entirely agree with some behavioral values sanctioned in the culture. An organization's core values (e.g., commitment) provide "the glue" that holds it together through time and are known as the organization's "sense of character or integrity!" After identification of personal and team values, the leadership team embarks on an activity to describe its core beliefs about the school system, their relationship to the team's set of values, and their effectiveness as demonstrated by individuals in the school system. This session is a great opportunity for the leadership team to learn more about the belief system in the school district and its current level of efficacy.

### Creating an Effective Performance Evaluation of Appointed Superintendents

Appointed superintendents shudder to think about their annual assessments. School boards dread them. Some school board members or the superintendent avoid the process, which is even worse than dreading them. Nobody looks forward to annual assessments. This training session helps the leadership team create an effective system that can work in the school district and directly increase student achievement. This session explores the performance evaluation of appointed superintendents to understand: 1) their importance in increasing student achievement and accomplishing other school district goals; 2) the elements of an effective evaluation tool; 3) the various types of evaluation systems; and, 4) timelines for conducting evaluations. At the end of the session, the leadership team receives a Resource Notebook containing board self-assessment instruments; samples of superintendent evaluation policies and job descriptions, formative, summative, and 360° evaluation instruments; cycle/timeline for superintendents' evaluations; superintendent contracts – evaluation section; and, an evaluation process manual.



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### Developing a Shared Vision For Your District

A vision is what the school board wants the district to become – the ideal tomorrow that will be created today. An explicit vision directs and shapes the school district. The purpose of this training is to guide the leadership team through a series of activities that helps clarify the concept of vision and to provide a process for making the vision a top priority in the school district and the community. This session is appropriate for a leadership team that is interested in creating a vision for the school district. In this interactive session, the characteristics and elements of a vision are explored, criteria for creating a vision are examined, a process for aligning the mission statement and strategic plan with the vision is described, and the advocacy role of the leadership team in promoting the vision is discussed. The leadership team participates in several hands-on tasks to guide their understanding of responsibilities associated with leading the school district to creation of a shared vision for the district. The session ends with developing strategic directions for formulating and articulating the vision.

### Essentials of Leadership

Leaders are constantly challenged to do more with less, adapt quickly to changing circumstances, innovate on the fly, and deal with extreme uncertainty. This session examines essential skills of leadership that the school board and superintendent need to practice consistently to be successful. A personal reflection form is conducted to: 1) begin identifying leadership qualities that are important to the leadership team; and, 2) generate a list of adjectives or adverbs that best describe attributes of a good educational leader. The team also engages in a self-evaluation which contains questions relating to specific leadership team skills/behaviors, i.e., communications, interpersonal skills, teamwork, etc. Team members must assess the behaviors from both an individual and team perspective. The session concludes with viewing and discussing a video entitled *The Leadership Challenge* based on the well-known business book of the same name by James Kouzes and Barry Posner. Five (5) practices and ten (10) skills and behaviors of exemplary leadership are presented during the video. This particular leadership model was derived from more than twenty (20) years of research. To understand this model, the leadership team explores through interactive exercises each practice and commitment and relates them to a specific problem area in the school district that has been identified



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by the team. The desired session outcomes are for the leadership team to understand elements of leading and to identify actions for incrementally creating forward momentum as a team.

### **Fight the Good Fight: Creating Harmonious Relationships**

What are the pros and cons of conflict? What is your attitude toward conflict? Do you know your conflict tendencies? It is important that a leadership team learns how to successfully handle conflict.

Conflict takes two (2) forms, either constructive or destructive. Constructively, conflict can help to bring issues to the forefront and be addressed while destructively, it can deteriorate relationships and prevent positive outcomes. This module is designed to: 1) identify the individual conflict style of each leadership team member and to learn how it contributes to group behavior; 2) explore the symptoms of *groupthink* and complete an activity called “*unplugging groupthink*,” 3) identify patterns of behavior and team relationships that support constructive conflict; 4) generate a list of strategies to overcome/avoid destructive conflict and create constructive conflict; and, 5) prepare an action plan of processes that need to be in place to ensure healthy conflict. A video entitled “Groupthink” is viewed to illustrate the concept of group dynamics during the decision-making process.

### **Good Decision-Making Through Effective Problem-Solving**

Effective and efficient problem-solving and decision-making are not only valuable individual skills for work and non-work situations alike, but they are also prerequisites for effective ongoing organizational performance and success. The ten (10) components of effective problem-solving are discussed and correlated to the leadership team members’ responsibilities for each component. This PROCESS for tackling problem-solving is explored: *Step 1 – decide the process; Step 2 – define the problem; Step 3 – identify the real problem; Step 4 – determine the potential causes for the problem; and, Step 5 – generate alternative approaches.* Problem-solving tools such as the drill down process, cause and effect diagrams, flow charts, and SWOT (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats) analysis are studied. Tools for reaching good decisions are also identified. A powerful decision-



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making technique called the “Six Thinking Hats,” which is designed to scrutinize important decisions from a number of different perspectives, is used by the leadership team to explore an educational issue.

### Good Measures for Data-Driven Governance

This session focuses on the use of data in policy and seeks to provide school board members a comfort level with data that allows them to ask the district staff meaningful questions based on information presented to the school board. This session is designed to provide governance team members with a common vocabulary around data, an explanation of the various types of data, a series of critical questions that should be asked at various points in data conversations, and resources to assist in those conversations. The necessary type of data and its usefulness will vary as school boards move their discussions through this framework which includes data basics, data sources and cycles, data application, and data driven governance.

### Improving Communication by Understanding Leadership Styles

Misunderstandings or even interpersonal conflict can often be traced to a difference in leadership style. In the workplace, people encounter a variety of styles. Understanding the common traits of each leadership style relative to an individual’s communication style will quickly pinpoint the dominant leadership style of others. In this session, the leadership team will gain a deeper understanding of each team member’s leadership style and how the individual styles work together on the team. First, participants discuss concepts, definitions, and examples of leadership. Then, each team member creates a personalized description of his or her leadership characteristics which is correlated to one of four (4) leadership styles. An examination of the strengths and challenges of each style is discussed before undertaking a discussion on the communication methods most frequently used by each style. This is a highly interactive and energetic session.



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### **Improving Student Achievement by Aligning the Work of the School District: Linking the Strategic Plan, the Budget, and School Improvement**

*Must have a board approved district strategic plan.*

To provide effective governance for the school district, the leadership team must assure that systemic structures have been successfully linked throughout the district for improving student achievement and providing a cost effective management system. Legal responsibilities are delineated in the school board's role in finance and school improvement. The majority of the session involves exploring the development of aligned systems in a school district and understanding the framework for alignment that will enable the school district to be flexible and respond rapidly and consistently to changes in the environment. Session activities include: 1) reviewing the goals in the school district's strategic plan and their vertical alignment throughout the school system; 2) matching the Florida Department of Education's focus areas with the school district's strategic goals, school improvement plan goals, and budgetary line items; and, 3) completing an alignment activity to determine the district's current status on nineteen (19) key actions for effective governance.

### **The Key Works of School Boards**

School boards are charged with the responsibility to create conditions within their school districts that enable students to meet rigorous knowledge and performance standards. It is not an easy task and requires school board members to understand the issues, align resources with adopted goals, and establish and foster a culture for students, teachers, principals, etc., that leads to high student achievement. The goal of this session is to assist the leadership team in developing behaviors that are essential for building and sustaining a high performing school system through effective governance. The eight (8) key actions that successful school boards understand and achieve as essential elements of their work and focus are: *vision, standards, assessment, accountability, alignment, climate, collaboration, and continuous improvement*. An extensive self-assessment tool is completed by the leadership team to gauge its initial understanding and current level of readiness in each key action area. After reviewing and discussing each key action, the



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leadership team charts what the school district has done extremely well and what things the school district could do differently.

### Meeting the Challenge of Educational Change

This session examines the need for deep systemic change in the educational system in order for this country to become competitive in a global society. The session is designed to deepen the leadership team's knowledge of the change process, and then to apply this information to obtain a profound understanding of how the school district must change to prepare students for surviving and competing in a global economy. Participants explore creation of new and challenging curriculums and test their understanding of curriculum design based on the theory of "*Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships.*" The session ends with an activity requiring the leadership team to formulate ten (10) questions that focus team members on a process for initiating and conducting a district needs assessment. This assessment tool is aimed at identifying current strengths and weaknesses in the school district and targeting community resources to utilize as the district moves toward a more demanding curriculum.

### Planning, Implementing, and Monitoring the Budget Process

The school district's budget is the most important document that the board approves on an annual basis. The district's priorities can be discovered in the items that are fully-funded, those that are only partially funded, and those that are not funded at all. Yet, the board frequently feels as though they haven't been involved in the budgeting process, causing an erosion of the board/superintendent relationship. This session begins by assisting the governance team in understanding budget language basics and the Florida Education Finance Program. Next, the training guides the school board in developing a meaningful process by which the leadership team can have appropriate governance input into the budget process throughout the fiscal year so that there are no surprises when the budget is presented for approval.





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### Power Through Policy

Ordinary citizens seem to agree that one of the most important functions of the school board is to develop and adopt policies that effectively improve learning for all students. This session stresses to school board members the significance of policymaking and the tendency for school boards to neglect this paramount duty. The session begins with a “*Fact or Fiction quiz*” about policymaking and the process of policymaking in order to dispel some myths. Next, the leadership team conducts a search of its current policy manual to identify policies that have been adopted in the governance areas of vision, structure, accountability, and advocacy.

A workable step-by-step process for policymaking is proposed including a description of the school board’s responsibilities at each step. Other session topics include: 1) identifying Florida Statutes that govern policy adoption; 2) perusing a list of policies that should be adopted by the school district; 3) revising a policy manual and what “questions need to be asked;” and, 4) explaining the order of the precedence for bargaining agreements, school district policies, and school district procedures.

### Public Engagement with Public Education

Today, community involvement is more important than ever as the public – parents, business leaders, policymakers, and legislators – has raised its expectations for improved student achievement and a voice in school decision-making. School districts that have the support of their communities pass needed tax elections. Boards and administrators that employ systems to discover and manage issues often can spot a crisis before it happens. This module has been developed to help in understanding the rationale, the benefits, and the concerns that are part of the process of convening the community. Through well-designed public engagement efforts, school boards can lead their communities to talk about “our” public schools, rather than “the” public schools.



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### Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships of the Board and the Superintendent

This session explains the legal status and authority of the school board and superintendent in their respective positions in the governmental structure of public education. The significance of role identification is examined along with distinguishing the difference between governance and administrative responsibilities in the school district. The leadership team actively engages in an “*information share*” activity to differentiate the legal powers and duties of the school board and superintendent which are set forth in Florida Statutes. Effective communication between the school board members and the superintendent is discussed, including identification of barriers, typical problem areas in the communication process, and strategies for engaging in productive conversations. Real life scenarios to identify the appropriate role of the school board and superintendent are used.

### Strategic Planning

This session is designed as an “entry level” module for a leadership team that has not completed a strategic plan and is currently considering development of a strategic plan for the school district. The instructional components acquaint the leadership team members with the basic fundamentals of a strategic planning process and introduce activities which are typically conducted during the process. The six (6) prerequisites of initiating a strategic planning process are described. Additionally, the ten (10) keys to successfully leading organizational planning are discussed; for example, Key 2 is to have a *mission based upon a shared vision* and Key 7 is to *encourage innovation and flexibility*. A basic five (5) step strategic planning process is presented and each step is explored: Step 1 – getting ready; Step 2 – articulating the mission and vision; Step 3 – assessing the situation; Step 4 – developing strategies, goals and objectives; and, Step 5 – completing the written plan. Experiences gained through this session should provide the leadership team with a great deal of insight about the strategic planning process and assist the team in determining whether or not it wants to undergo a comprehensive or an abbreviated planning process.



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### **Targeted Communication: Hit or Miss**

This module is designed for a governance team interested in learning about developing a communication plan. It is not intended to be used to update an existing plan.

The purpose of this session is to encourage the leadership team to take seriously the responsibility of developing an effective system of communication for the school district. Elements included in communication training include: understanding and practice with creating the components of a communication plan, knowing the differences between internal and external communications, conducting a communication audit, exploring and identifying the district's communication resources and establishing a plan to begin the development of a communication process. Sample communication plans have been collected for the leadership team to peruse. For the large portion of this session, participants are engaged in interactive and "hands-on" tasks.

### **Tools and Strategies to Support Student Achievement**

The module delves into the FSBA Governance Model, the Iowa Association of School Board's Lighthouse Study, the Common Core State Standards origin and philosophy, Florida's Standards, and how all of these connect to the focus of the work in every classroom – student learning. The impact on student learning and governance responsibilities of the board are made relevant within the context of the Florida Standards initiatives and connections are clearly drawn between governance, student achievement, and the delivery of a quality education in the classroom. This module explores the leadership roles that the team must assume for the successful implementation of higher standards in the team's district.

### **Turning Vision into Reality—An Execution Strategy**

This session is designed to provide an execution strategy to help the leadership team revitalize the school district's vision. At a time when change is happening at a faster pace than ever before, it is imperative that the leadership team's strategy be



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flexible in order to achieve the shared vision. First, the governance team examines the inspirational nature of vision. Then, the importance of an execution strategy is explored in-depth, including identification of external forces which could act to derail the strategy and planning ways to overcome these forces. This session walks the governance team through a practical application of Liz Mellon and Simon Carter's book, *The Strategy of Execution—A Five Step Guide for Turning Vision into Action*.