

WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Reno, Nevada

January 10, 2006

TITLE: Adoption of Board of Trustees Standing Committee Guidelines

FROM: John Albrecht, General Counsel

DATE REPORT WRITTEN: December 28, 2005

PRESENTER(S): John Albrecht, General Counsel

LENGTH OF PRESENTATION: 5 Minutes

BACKGROUND: The Board of Trustees has been working on Action Plan for Building the Board of Trustees Governing Capacity. Governance Counsel, Doug Eadie, prepared a resolution regarding Guidelines for the Board of Trustees Standing Committees. Exhibit E, Action Plan: Building the Board of Trustees Governing Capacity. These guidelines are contained in Roman II.C. of the Action Plan and included in this Board item.

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION: None

SUMMARY: This is the fourth step in fulfilling the Action Plan: Building the Board of Trustees Governing Capacity. This resolution establishes basic guidelines for the operation of the three standing committees.

LEGAL: None

FINANCIAL: None

ALTERNATIVES: The Board may (1) adopt the resolution including the guidelines in Roman II.C. as another step in strengthening the board; or, (2) decline to adopt the resolution.

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION: That the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Whereas the Governance Task Force Action Plan sets forth guidelines to govern the operation of the Board's standing committees to ensure that they function as strong "governing engines" in helping the Board of Trustees to carry out its detailed governing work;

Be it resolved that:

The Board of Trustees adopts the standing committee guidelines that are set forth in Section II-C of the Governance Task Force Action Plan and directs the Board Operations Committee to periodically update the guidelines to ensure that that the Board of Trustees' standing committees function smoothly and productively, carrying out their responsibilities in a full and timely fashion.

STANDING COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

The following straightforward guidelines govern the operation of the Board's standing committees to ensure that the Board's standing committees function as effective vehicles for accomplishing the detailed governing work of the Board.

1. Each Board member should be assigned to one (but only one) of the Board standing committees (Note an exception: that standing committee chairs also serve on the Board Operations Committee.). This will ensure that each standing committee has a "critical mass" of members and will guard against Board members' overextension and the dilution of governance.
2. All matters coming to the full Board should go through the appropriate standing committee and be introduced by committee members. No action items should be introduced directly to the full Board, without having come through the appropriate Board standing committee, and all reports to the Board should be made by standing committee members (with the sole exceptions of the regular Superintendent report to the Board and when non-Board advisory committee members or staff members present special briefings under the aegis of the standing committees).
3. Committees should meet far-enough in advance of the regular Board meeting that committee recommendations can be prepared in a full and timely fashion for transmittal to the full Board. Committee meetings should never be held in conjunction with the regular Board meeting since this would lead to ritualistic, rather than substantive, committee sessions.
4. Whenever a standing committee believes that the full Board should be involved in-depth in dealing with an issue, the committee should take the initiative in recommending to the Board Operations Committee that a special full Board work session be held as part of the regular Board meeting.
5. Trustees should be rotated among the Board standing committees regularly to ensure that their governing experience is richer and more diverse, and standing committee chairs should also be rotated on a regular basis.
6. The Superintendent should regularly attend standing committee meetings.
7. While the Board Operations Committee should be involved in developing the Board agenda, it should not pre-review or revise the content of committee reports and recommendations to the full Board. The other two Board standing committees report directly to the full Board.
8. Board member service on Board-created ad hoc committees, task forces or technical advisory bodies dealing with non-governing matters should be avoided since such non-governing work will reduce the time available for the very demanding work of governing.