Changing the Culture of Your Board

Matt Lee, Field Service Representative
Theresa Lewis, Field Service Representative

Tuesday, October 23 • 10:00am - 11:30am
How We Got Here…
Agenda

• What is Culture?
• Symptoms
• Consequences
• Guest Speakers: board leaders talk about their individual issues and achievements.
• Toolbox for Change
What is Board Culture?

Turns out…it’s kinda hard to define...
What is Board Culture to You?
Culture is “...a pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to the problems.”
Guest Speakers

• Kevin Blondina, Member/Past President, Franklin Borough (Sussex County)

• David Sarnoff, Member/Past President, Fort Lee, (Bergen County)

• Cheryl Pitts, President, Winslow Township, (Camden County)

• Ginny Murphy, President, Washington Township, (Gloucester County)
Symptoms of a Culture in Need of Change

- Personality conflicts among the board
- Factionalism on the board
- Disregard for required confidentiality
- Lack of direction for the district
- Poor legacy governance practices
- And...
Consequences of a Poor Board Culture

“When a board culture is described as “dysfunctional,” in my experience, it usually means that the governing process is either highly adversarial and/or characterized by uncivil interactions, and it almost always takes a tremendous toll over time, not just in terms of emotional stress, but also in poor decision-making.”

The Cultured Club, Doug Eadie, American School Board Journal, March 2009
What are some other consequences of a poor board culture?
Getting Back on Track
Agreement on the Issue

HOUSTON
WE
HAVE A
PROBLEM
Resolve to Change

Not impossible to drive change without complete buy in, but it makes it a LOT easier if you can get everyone pulling in the same direction!
Implementing Change
Changing Your Culture is Not an Overnight Thing!

Change is a process, not an event.
What Were the Signs that Your Plan was Working?
There’s No One Recipe for Change – Probably More Art than Science
Working at your tables, and using our discussions and your own experiences as a starting point, what are some things you think would help to change the culture of your board?
Resources

- NJSBA representative
- Policy manual/by-laws
- NJSBA Workshop sessions
- BOE Self Evaluation
- Setting board goals; updating board and public on progress
- Experienced board members
- CSA – not an enforcement role, the board should police itself
- Business Administrator – Subject Matter Expert
- County and state leaders
- Article: The Cultured Club
Questions?