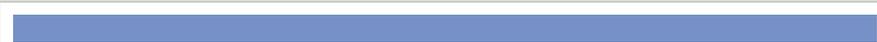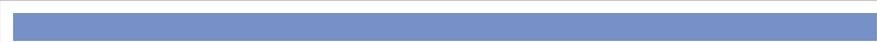# Policy Governance Districts - Networking Breakfast

These are the results of a pre-conference survey for the Policy Governance Networking Breakfast. There were four parts to the survey: (1) Demographic Data, (2) Feedback on the 2005 Roundtable, (3) Policy Governance Principles, and (4) Objectives for 2006 Networking Breakfast. Twenty people responded to the survey. Their responses are on pp 1-6. The most commonly occurring responses are highlighted in bold. On page 7 we have summarized the data and proposed a format for preparation and conduct of the networking breakfast. This document and last year's Roundtable notes are available at http://www.policygov.com/OurWork.htm

Bob Hughes and Rick Maloney

WHO: Boards & Superintendents using (or exploring) Policy Governance
WHAT: Survey to prepare for roundtable discussion
WHERE: WSSDA Annual Conference in Spokane
WHEN: November 15-18, 2006
WHY: To identify and prepare roundtable discussion topics

PART 1 - Demographic Data - **This part contained four questions, Questions #1 thru 4.**

1. Is your district using the Policy Governance (R) model of John Carver? (If you are not sure, click NO) **20 people responded:**

Yes		**17**	**85%**
No		3	15%
	Total	20	100%

2. How long has your district operated under a Policy Governance model? **20 people responded:**

Not currently a PG district		3	15%
up to 1 year		1	5%
>1 to 2 years		3	15%
>2 to 3 years		**9**	**45%**
>3 to 4 years		2	10%
More than 4 years		2	10%
	Total	20	100%

3. What is your role?

Board member		**16**	**80%**
Superintendent		4	20%
Other, Please Specify		0	0%
	Total	20	100%

4. Did you attend last year's Policy Governance Roundtable (2005 WSSDA Conference)? **20 people responded:**

Yes		**17**	**85%**
No		3	15%
	Total	20	100%

Policy Governance Districts - Networking Breakfast

PART 2 – For those who attended last year's roundtable discussion. The 2005 WSSDA Policy Governance Roundtable consisted of a brainstorming session during which issues were prioritized for discussion, followed by a short discussion of identified issues in priority order. **This part contained six questions, Questions #5 thru 10.**

5. On a scale of 1 to 5, how did the 2005 Policy Governance Roundtable compare with other WSSDA sessions you attended? **17 people responded to this question:**

One of the worst		0	0%
Below average		0	0%
Middle of the pack		2	12%
Better than most		6	35%
One of the best		**9**	**53%**
Total		17	100%

6. The purpose of the 2005 PG Roundtable was to bring together board members (and their superintendents) who wanted to talk with other board members/superintendents about governance issues. If you participated in the PG Roundtable, please compare its similarity to other offerings at the WSSDA Conference. **17 people responded to this question:**

Common issues - Many WSSDA sessions deal with similar governance issues.	0	0%
Mixed - Several other sessions deal with similar governance issues, while others deal with implementation of programs.	0	0%
Rare - Few other sessions focus on governance issues. Most deal with programs and their implementation.	**14**	**82%**
Unique - All other sessions deal with implementation of programs.	3	18%
Total	17	100%

7. What results (if any) did you get out of last year's discussion? **15 people responded to this question:**

The discussion stimulated further discussion among our members.
Reassurance of how we are doing with Policy Governance. Even though we are fairly new to this I felt that we are on track and will be learning for quite sometime. It was nice to listen to others who use the module.
New ideas. Collaboration with other district to discuss similiar challenges
Ideas and confirmation.
The greatest benefit was meeting other board members engaged in policy governance. I have since followed up with many of them, attending their board meetings in some cases. I better understand how specific Policy Governance recommendations are implemented.
Experiences of other districts and how related to our board governance--received many new ideas.
First of all, the ability to network with others using policy governance. Then, being able to provide scenarios and getting opinions on how to handle them.
Our Board reviewed its Board meeting format and its Superintendent evalution tool.
I liked hearing how other districts have implemented PG. Also, any common problems and/or issues they have had to deal with.
Told me that we must grow into this system--give it a chance.
CEO evaluation and connection with other districts

I enjoyed the discussion about linkage. However, I don't remember any aha moments in particular.

We began discussions with our whole board on policy governance, followed up with a training for the board in June with Connie Fletcher, and just this month determined that we would move forward to formally adopt policy governance.

Some boards and their superintendents work better together than others.

A process for speeding up review of monitoring by email a month before final vote.

Here is the list of brainstormed topics. Due to time constraints only the first six items were discussed.
Note: In parentheses are the # of votes from responses to question 8 below, showing preference for discussion:
1. **(4 votes)** How does the School Board conduct linkages, over time, that are meaningful to its work? How do you translate owner input into Ends?
2. **(6 votes) Linkage techniques that work. Is community wide linkage workable?**
3. **(0 votes)** How to move staff and community into policy governance operations?
4. **(4 votes)** How does Ends monitoring data convince the Board that progress is being made? By whom? Is it reasonable?
5. **(6 votes) How do you determine reasonable progress by the CEO?**
6. **(1 vote)** How to transition effectively from traditional to policy governance?
-- THE FOLLOWING WERE NOT DISCUSSED --
7. **(2 votes)** How to move a board into policy governance? Steps involved. 100% buy-in necessary? How to deal with < 100%?
8. **(6 votes) How does a Board prepare for new members and govern itself to prevent maverick/destructive behavior?**
9. **(1 vote)** Dealing with outside forces (media, special interest groups) not understanding the model.
10. **(3 votes)** Role of strategic planning to achieve the Ends.
11. **(4 votes)** How does a School Board self monitor in a political climate? How does it drive self-improvement?
12. **(2 votes)** Difficult board elections…running for re-election and remaining true to Policy Governance.
13. **(2 votes)** How do bonds and levies get handled by a policy governance board?

8. From the above list, which do you most prefer discussing this year, and why?
17 persons responded to this question, with some respondents 'voting' on more than one topic:

#7 - How do you move a board into policy governance? Reason: I'd be interested in learning about difficulties (and how they were overcome) as the board decided to adopt PG.

#5 - Reasonable progress by CEO. There are many different ideas on our board.
#8 - Preparation of new members. People are always coming and going. What if a new member is not in favor?
#11. How do we drive self-improvement?

#1,#2

#2, #4 I would like to continue discussion about linkage techniques and monitoring data -- items 2 and 4 above. These are the topics that continue to be focus areas for our board and they are key to the Policy Governance model/process.

#4,#5,#8 These are ongoing concerns in my district. We often lapse into micromanaging, or spend an inordinate amount of time on trivial, non-value issues.

#2 Linkages--How to schedule and make them useful. Reasonable interpretation--The role of the superintendent and the board in creating them. Strategic planning and goal setting--how they fit into governance.

#8--important to continue making progress.

#4 (again); #8 (we'll be getting new board members next year); #10; #13.

#4 continues to be an area that we're working on as a school district. It is hard for some Board members to use the standard of "reasonable interpretation" rather than "but this is the way I'd like to see it done".
#5 regarding reasonable progress by the CEO is also a dilemma for some Board members. What is "reasonable" to the school district's circumstances (budget, staffing, etc.) may not be the amount or speed of progress that individual Board members would like.
#11 - School Boards need to regularly self-monitor their work with each other and their commitment to this governance model. It is difficult to talk frankly with each other in a self-monitoring manner in the presence of an audience that includes the media, association president, and staff.

12.

1. We are currently struggling with this. We want to conduct linkages but only meaningful linkages that provide data towards our Ends.

#1&#2

#1 and #10 - Ends discussion because it is our most important work #8 - to provide a smooth transition; #13 - Question-Is this only the superintendents work?
#2 My district needs help connecting to the community. Our linkage has been few and far between. Linkage that works would be my choice.
#7,#9,#11,#5,#6
#5 - It has been difficult keeping on track
#8,#10,#11,#12,#5,#2

9. What needs did you have that were not addressed? 10 people responded to this question:

Sharing of information, perhaps 'one good idea' per PG district, so we can benefit from others' work.
We have questions in reviewing our monitoring reports. We also have member(s) that still seem to want to "micromanage". How do we get through to them that this is no longer what we do under Policy Governance.
If student learning is our focus, our purpose, I believe we need to discuss how Policy governance ties in, is interdependent, with the work of the staff. I believe that if we don't continue to visit the "why?" question and the impact on student learning, we will not be able to make inroads with other districts and particularly with WSSDA.
Care and feeding of new members, and new candidates for board seats. How do you identify those who would be good under a Carver system, how do you persuade them to run and what orientation do you give them once on the board.
Maybe more specifics--but maybe we have to develop them ourselves.
I can't think of anything.
It would have been helpful to have copies of each superintendent's interpretations of the Ends, the indicators they have selected, and the goals that have been set based on the indicators.
Succession planning of the CEO.
How to deal with superintendents and board members who hide behind policy governance.
How do you deal with Board members with "special interests" "axe to grind"?

10. How could the session have been better organized? 11 people responded to this question:

More time. More prep materials for handout.
I thought that the session was very good and our board and superintendent felt it was very helpful to us. It felt like more of a discussion than anything too organized. I guess if you wanted it better organized maybe stick to the agenda to cover all of the topics listed. Even though we didn't have time for everything listed we gained.
It was great. Thanks.
It was very informative--no improvement
I can't think of anything.
A larger room was needed with more chairs and tables. More handouts were needed, too.
More time given for dialogue.
If WSSDA would step up and recognize PG. Otherwise I liked it.
More in attendance for greater input and brainstorming.
The problem addressed in #9 is inherence in the model.
There might be opportunity to discuss in small groups by table.

PART 3 - John Carver's Ten Policy Governance Principles – **This part contained one question (asking which principle should be discussed) Note: In parentheses are the # of votes from responses to question 11 below.**

1. **(3 votes)** Board stands in for constituents, those who morally 'own' the district.
2. **(3 votes)** Board speaks with one voice, or not at all.
3. **(3 votes)** Board directs the Superintendent via policy, expressing in writing the values of the community.
4. **(0 votes)** Board instructs no staff except the Superintendent.
5. **(0 votes)** Policies are written for Ends (what is to be achieved) and Means (all other issues).
6. **(1 vote)** Ends policies are defined positively (telling the Superintendent what is to be achieved).
7. **(1 vote)** Means are defined negatively (what means are unacceptable, and should therefore be avoided).
8. **(5 votes) Board sets expectations 1st in broadly expressed values, then thru progressively more detailed policies.**
9. **(2 votes)** The Board may change the level of specificity in its policies at any time.
10. **(5 votes) Board evaluates Superintendent only against criteria written in policy.**

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11. Please identify any one principle you would most like to discuss by identifying its # - and explain why we should discuss it. **20 people responded to this question. 3 indicated more than one principle:**

#8 - The Board sets expectations.... I think this is the most difficult part of PG. We must avoid getting too wrapped up with "compliance" to policy and make sure that we are setting expectations that challenge the superintendent and district.
#3 Discuss the difficulties encountered in not giving direction verbally (difficulty refraining from, difficulty in figuring out how to write guidance, difficulty tracking performance)
#6 and #7 seem to be the most confusing and most time consuming parts of policy governance. Good explanation and discussion of how others define [Ends and Means] would be helpful. #10 - Superintendent evaluations, another area where board members seem to want to "go back" to the old ways. Do we still need to do evaluations the old style? Some of us don't think so. Others do.
#3. It is imperative that we create a "shared mission" (purpose) and a "shared vision" What do we want our kids, ourselves, and our system to become. The roadmap of where we are going.
#1 I think that ownership -- item #1 above -- is a topic worth discussion and consideration. Ownership is complex, given our changing demographics and communities.
#2. It is not clear what this means. It is impossible for any group that meets under public scrutiny to speak with one voice. At our best moments we argue important community values and rank order them. The newspaper reports our disagreement more prominently than our ultimate agreement. Some of us have strong enough feelings to reply to such articles, correcting mistakes and furthering the community discussion. This is a good thing in most cases and its value outweighs the harm that results in some cases.
#1
#10--if the criteria is broad then the evaluation is broad or more specific?
#8 - a bit confused as to how to do that. #9 - How? #10 - Evaluation process using policy governance.
#1. Individual Board members sometimes forget that they are representing the "owners" of the school district, not the staff in the school district. It would be helpful for the Board members attending the networking session to discuss ways to communicate this role to teachers and staff without teachers/staff feeling disrespected.
#10 - Principle 10.
#10. It seems to be a minor problem for our board. We have member(s) who like to micro manage beyond written policy.
#8
#2 What do you do when one board member does not participate?
9 - in changing the level of specificity to what extent do ends become means and do we maintain discipline.
#8. How often have other boards drilled down their policies to include more specifics and what have been the results?

#3 - values of the community - communication with the community to elicit those values I think will be new to us and valuable to learn about

#9 - I think there is potential for board disagreement on level of specificity - with those who feel like they are giving up management control by going formally towards PG wishing to have more specificity. Would be good to learn how to deal with the tensions between more and less specificity.

#8 - Accountability has been difficult -- attempts to specify goals more precisely (in order to make #10 meaningful) is met with the chiding admonition that any level of detail beyond the general goal of 'meeting the needs of children' violates the governance model

#2 Does this preclude a single member from meeting with the Superintendent to discuss a specific issue, or just to meet once in a while to talk?

#10 and the dangers of that when there are other simmering issues in the district.

PART 4 - 2006 Discussion Objectives - **This part contained one question, asking about objectives for 2006.**

For the 2006 WSSDA Conference, a policy governance networking breakfast is scheduled for Friday, November 17th, 7:00-8:15 am in Doubletree Salon III.

12. If you plan to attend, what are your objectives for this Policy Governance networking discussion? Other comments?
16 people responded to this question:

Learn from others and refine our process.

1. Sharing ideas
2. Problem-solving challenges
3. Strategy for changing WSSDA's uncooperative attitude

To collaborate with other boards that are using PG and to let WSSDA know that Policy Gov. whether it's the Carver Model or not is being used and is successful.

What is the link between policy governance and improved academic performance?

To share perspectives, ideas, and success stories. To network with others using PG. To reflect and consider next steps.

Practical advice on addressing common issues from other boards using policy governance.

Wanting to learn as much as possible to make our process work smoothly

Learning more about policy governance and its application.

Continue to refine my knowledge, skills, and application of Policy Governance.

On-going dialogue among board members who are interested in PG.

I like to hear other districts' problems and solutions. It's also nice to see Bob Hughes so early in the morning.

Not sure if I will be attending yet.

Learn more from other boards who've done this transition in WA.

I cannot attend WSSDA this year

I would like information from districts who currently use this format to see how they feel about it.
How is this different? Why is this better? Is this another "new" concept in education, similar to others in the past that have been replaced by something "better" which appeared on the scene a few years later?

To expand my thinking about policy governance. To learn skills for dealing with it and all of its ramifications

Policy Governance Districts - Networking Breakfast

Analysis of survey data:

- Networking Need: Respondents indicate a need among districts that are exploring, adopting, or maintaining the policy governance model to improve our conceptual understanding of the model, share information, ideas, and techniques, and problem-solve, using other PG districts as a resource, in a neutral environment conducive to asking questions and challenging assumptions.
- 2005 PG Roundtable: Last year's PG Roundtable discussion held at the WSSDA Conference was considered worthwhile ('one of the best' WSSDA sessions). Primary benefits cited were:
  - Contact made with others dealing with similar issues;
  - Identification of techniques (such as survey tools), and
  - Reassurance that we are not alone.

  Critique: There was not enough time available to discuss all issues identified during brainstorming, nor enough time to fully discuss those topics that were discussed. Of the brainstormed topics, those most in need of continuing discussion are:
  1. "Linkage That Works" - Linkage techniques that work for districts, and
  2. Bringing "New Members On-Board" – How to identify/help new members who are ready for and will be open to PG concepts

  Additional topics with continuing interest include:
  3. "Reasonable Progress" – Judging progress when monitoring/evaluating the superintendent;
  4. "Self-Monitoring" – How boards go about their self-monitoring function.
- New Issues: Additional needs not addressed last year included sharing good ideas and
  5. "Deviating Behaviors" - Dealing with individual board members/superintendents who, after the Board has decided to adopt PG, do not accept or respect the model.
- PG Principles that should be discussed are superintendent monitoring/evaluation - "The Board evaluates the Superintendent only against criteria written in policy," (see #3 above) as well as:
  6. "Broad then Detailed" - "The Board sets expectations first in broadly expressed values, then through progressively more detailed policies"
  7. "Who Are Owners?" - "The Board stands in for constituents, those who morally 'own' the district"
  8. "Ends vs Means" Distinction - "Ends policies are defined positively (telling the Superintendent what is to be achieved" while "Means are defined negatively (what means are unacceptable, and should therefore be avoided."
  9. "One Voice" Concept" – "The Board speaks with one voice, or not at all."
- Other interesting suggested discussion topics were:
  - Research into a possible link between using the PG model and student achievement
  - Gaining WSSDA acceptance/recognition of PG, or dealing with WSSDA aversion to PG

Pre-conference preparation: (Sharing good ideas from each district) Respondents indicated a desire for "good ideas and examples" handout materials. If your district has any PG experience at all, please consider bringing 30 copies of any of the following:

- PG work products used by districts that are willing to share with others.
- Tips, tricks, and traps that can be offered as lessons learned and advice for others.
- Any other PG reference materials that have been useful to you.

Proposed Agenda:

7:00-7:10 am   Pick up continental breakfast outside the room (Doubletree Salon III), sign in and pick up handouts (if available) near room entrance, for back-home review/use, and select seating at tables marked by discussion topic (written on card at table). Possible 'table topics' from the survey (we can "vote with our feet" by sitting at the "table-of-most-interest") are:

1. Linkage That Works	4. Self-Monitoring	7. Who Are "Owners"?
2. New Members On-Board	5. Deviating Behaviors	8. "Ends vs Means" Distinction
3. Reasonable Progress	6. 1st Broad, then Detailed	9. "One Voice" Concept

7:10-7:50 am   Breakfast & discussion of table topics.
7:50-7:55 am   Opportunity for those who brought hand-outs to briefly describe.
7:55-8:05 am   Table reports summarizing key points discussed at each table.
8:05-8:15 am   Research/WSSDA/Next Steps – Discussion of PG Research dealing with student achievement; WSSDA Acceptance/Recognition/Aversion to PG; and Next steps for PG networking.