

At The Board Table: A School Board  
Group Learning Experience

# Four Ethical Dilemmas

For a Board's Consideration

Date updated: 01/28/14



Iowa Association of  
School Boards

### Introduction

As a service on the IASB website, we offer this “At the Board Table” as a way for your board to have a 15-30 minute “board development” item on your agenda. Boards that take time to discuss current educational issues generally find their common work at the board table to be easier and more effective.

It’s possible to consider this section as an individual board member, but it is much more effective if the entire board engages in the discussion. Working as a team is improved when boards come to a common understanding of ground rules and responsibilities.

If your board team conducts one of these discussions at your board table, each participant will earn three Better Boardsmanship points per session.

### Next Steps for Meeting Facilitators

1. Add a development item to your next board meeting agenda.
2. Download or open the presentation from the website at the URL listed below.
3. Print out the four scenarios. Decide if you want to read aloud or use as a script for board members.
4. Arrange for your board secretary to print out the district’s Ethics Policy, have this available as a handout. If you choose, you may wish to assign one statement to each board member for the second part of Section 3 of this exercise.
5. Conduct the exercise with your entire board.
6. Once you’ve completed the discussion, complete and return the form on the last page to receive credit for Better Boardsmanship points.

### Presentation Details

**Title:** Four Ethical Dilemmas for a Board’s Consideration

**Web location:**

<http://www.ia-sb.org/attheboardtable.aspx>

## Handout: Scenario #1

You are a school board member. Your niece is going to be the subject of an expulsion hearing. Your niece has told you she was not directly involved in the fight; she merely tried to help her best friend by reaching in to stop the quarrel. You feel your niece is being treated very unfairly, and that you should not lose your right to take part in the expulsion hearing as a school board member. You do not think you lose your rights as a school board member just because you are an involved member of the family.

What should you do?

## Handout: Scenario #2

You are a school board member. Your board just voted 4/3 to privatize your transportation department. You were not on the prevailing side. You believe it will ultimately result in less convenience for parents and maybe even a less safe environment for students. A reporter approaches you after the meeting. “How do you feel about the board’s decision?” You feel it was wrongheaded, and a horrible decision. You also feel that you need to have the integrity to say so.

What should you do?

### **Handout: Scenario #3**

You are a newly elected school board member. You were a former chairman of the “Keep Graceland Open” committee. This group opposed the closing of Graceland Elementary School. That position basically got you elected. Since you have been on the board you have received information regarding why economic and curricular reasons dictate the school must be closed. However, to vote to close the school would be letting down all your community supporters.

What should you do? How should you vote?

## Handout: Scenario #4

You are a school board member and your spouse is a teacher. Your spouse's age and experience in the district means he/she could take advantage of early retirement. The superintendent has recommended a policy which would not only be financially advantageous to you, but would also allow for that fun family travel you have been longing for. You truly believe this would be good for the district and you want to support the superintendent's recommendation.

What should you do? How should you vote?

## Handout: Take a Look at Your Own Policy, Part 1

Your staff has provided a copy of your own ethics policy. Take a look at the policy and briefly discuss:

- How well does this policy describe the key issues which are typically faced by school board members?
- Can you think of a situation where this policy has given you guidance?
- Is there a situation you can think of that this policy does not address?

## **Handout: Take a Look at Your Own Policy, Part 2**

Each board member selects/or is assigned (or both) a particular ethical principle out of your own ethics policy. Have each board member explain why this principle is important and the negative impact that disregarding this principle would have on the board.



## Notice of Participation

For Iowa board members: After taking part in this board discussion, you will be eligible to receive Better Boardmanship credits. For IASB to track your participation, please complete this form and return to:

Iowa Association of School Boards  
ATTN: Board Leadership Team  
6000 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50312  
Fax: 515-243-4992 Email: [cbloyer@ia-sb.org](mailto:cbloyer@ia-sb.org)

### Notice of Participation Form

(please print)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

**Participants** (Print your name, sign and tell us if you are a board member, president, vice president or superintendent.)

Name _____	Signature _____	Role _____
Name _____	Signature _____	Role _____
Name _____	Signature _____	Role _____
Name _____	Signature _____	Role _____
Name _____	Signature _____	Role _____
Name _____	Signature _____	Role _____
Name _____	Signature _____	Role _____
Name _____	Signature _____	Role _____

**Summary of Session** (Please provide a short summary of how your discussion went and any feedback on this tool.)

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