

EDU 5301 Educational Governance and Policy

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Analysis of Fiscal Responsibility by a Governing Board

School Board members have a major fiduciary responsibility to the children and community in which they serve. Ignorance is unacceptable so a mandate, such as the one requiring all newly elected board members to take six hours of training on fiscal oversight, accountability, and fiduciary responsibilities during the first year of his/her term. (Ed Law Sec 2102-a) only seems to make sense. As one of the primary responsibilities of the board is to prepare the budget, understanding the needs of the district and the means by which to support those needs is imperative. In a time of fiscal crisis where the 2% cap is in place, school officials are faced with the daunting task of "creative" financing. Each year it seems that the districts are faced with the challenge of cutting budgets to make the numbers work. No longer is it acceptable to raise taxes to create a surplus fund.

The new 3 "R's" of reducing, restructuring and redesigning are an integral part of planning. The new property tax cap has forced these new ideas from planning to practice. As districts are faced with the reduction or elimination of surplus funds, the revenue across the state seems to have equalized as the major source of revenue is currently property taxes. Less wealthy districts are at a disadvantage as the property taxes are lower, thereby generating less revenue. Although this issue has been challenged for decades, all the courts have supported local funding and local control despite the inequity.

As the local boards of education are to provide the fiscal resources to meet the instructional needs of students, their initial step is to establish the vision for the schools. Acting

together with the superintendent, it is the role of the board to implement a strategic plan to assist with the vision.

Several years ago corruption was discovered at a local school district, Roslyn, which was the genesis for numerous changes in the protocol and policy for control of internal operations on the fiscal level including the mandate for audits to be conducted, both internally and externally including the reporting of an auditor to the board. Additionally, several internal controls have been put in place in all district offices to prevent a similar situation as the one in Roslyn.

Finally, of course, is the challenge of doing more with fewer resources in an environment where we are participating in Common Core requiring countless hours of professional development and training.