



This bulletin, produced by TASB Leadership Team Services, examines research and shares philosophies to inform and promote exceptional governance within school boards across Texas.

Improving Student Learning through Focus and Intentionality

by Phil Gore, PhD, Division Director of Leadership Team Services

Focused and intentional practice over time results in improvement. When students focus on learning, their learning improves. When teachers focus on instruction, their instruction improves. When administrators focus on leadership, their leadership improves. When school boards focus on governance, their governance improves. When these actions are aligned and intentional, student learning improves in the classroom.

Dr. Ivan Lorentzen shared at the XG Summit earlier this year and again at the recent TASA/TASB Convention that good governance is not intuitive. What may seem correct and most valuable to an individual is not inherently good governance. This is where focusing on outcomes becomes essential. In particular, if achievement gaps are widening or overall student achievement is in decline, the system is not functioning within the realm of eXceptional Governance, and the focus needs to be brought back to the outcomes.

Ivan highlighted at Convention that district governance is not a solo endeavor, and it takes a team of intentional trustees working with a focused superintendent and effective instructional team to improve student learning in a district. Teachers can't do it alone. Administrators can't do it alone. And, school boards can't do it alone. Everyone in the continuum, from the boardroom to the classroom, has to be focused and intentional when it comes to improving student learning.

"Focused" means our eyes and thoughts are on the goal. A brief search for "focused good governance" brings up a number of helpful sites, including one that states, "Good governance focuses on intended beneficiaries." We believe the primary beneficiaries of public education are foremost the students, so no matter what comes up as a trustee, we should never lose sight of what is best for them.

"Intentional" means that we are strategically taking steps toward

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the goal and desired outcome. "Intentional" also emphasizes that our steps are appropriately measured. We are pushing forward at the right pace for long-term success. We are following a roadmap, with our best understanding of the direction to go. We are concentrating and measuring the health of our team and the progress we are making.

The fact is that focused and intentional school districts are improving student learning. Think about how your board governance can be more focused and intentional. If you want help creating a roadmap to success, join the XG Project and consider participating in XG Board Development. Visit LTS.tasb.org or call **800.580.8272** for more information.