



2026 ISBA Annual Convention Breakout Session Workshops

(Workshops are not in any particular order)

Charting the Course: Strategic Planning for Stronger Schools

Presented By:

- Debbie Critchfield, Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Kurt Liebich, President of the Idaho Board of Education
- Alica Holthaus, Deputy Superintendent, Idaho Department of Education
- Dr. Spencer Barzee, Deputy Superintendent, Idaho Department of Education
- McKenzie Johnson, Education Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor

Idaho's new Strategic Performance Plans present a significant opportunity for school districts/charter schools to strengthen student outcomes, enhance local governance, and align resources with community priorities. This session will provide an overview of implementation expectations, available supports, and practical strategies for developing effective plans that drive continuous improvement and meaningful results for students and why that matters.

Board Chair and Vice Chair Roundtable

Moderated By:

- Leslie Baker, Board Chair, Moscow Charter School

Panelist:

- Dave Wagers, Board Chair, Boise SD #001
- Jason Sevy, Board Chair, Marsing JSD #363
- Janelle Hill, Board Chair, Blackfoot Charter School

Being a board chair and vice chair comes with unique opportunities—and unique challenges. This interactive roundtable gives board chairs and vice chairs a chance to

connect with peers, share experiences, and learn from one another. Participants will discuss topics such as leading effective board meetings, working with the superintendent, navigating difficult board dynamics, engaging fellow board members, and handling challenging situations that arise throughout the year. Come prepared to share what has worked (and what hasn't), ask questions, and gain practical ideas from other board chairs and vice chairs across Idaho.

Governing with Clarity: Strengthening Transparency, Accountability, and Decision-Making in School Boards

Presented By:

- Charlie Rigby, Business Development Manager, Simbli by eBOARDsolutions
- Mark Willis, Chief Operating Officer, Simbli by eBOARDsolutions
- Jesse Howard, Business Development Representative, Simbli by eBOARDsolutions

Effective school board governance requires more than well-run meetings—it demands clear processes, transparent communication, and strong alignment to district/charter school priorities. In this session, board members will explore practical approaches to improving governance through structured workflows, better access to information, and intentional use of technology. Rather than focusing on tools, this session highlights how boards can reduce risk, improve public trust, and make more informed decisions in today's complex environment.

Superintendent Evaluation

Presented By:

- Dr. Spencer Barzee, Deputy Superintendent, Idaho Department of Education

Research shows that a high-quality superintendent/charter administrator evaluation is one of the most critical responsibilities of a school board. This session shares best practices for evaluations, with guidance from the Idaho School Boards Association model. Attendees will leave with practical tools to enhance evaluations, be equipped to align evaluation criteria with district goals, foster constructive communication, and build a process that promotes accountability and continuous growth.

Return on Goodwill

Presented By:

- Sam Demma, Keynote Speaker

This breakout session will be based on the ideas shared in Sam Demma's new book, *Return on Goodwill*, which teaches us that when we do good, expecting nothing in return, life surprises us with beautiful experiences and lovely people. It's eight chapters about generosity, service, curiosity, and all the ways we generate goodwill with others.

Building off of the practices in the book, Sam will guide the group to explore these ideas to create deeper relationships with the people around them.

What "Do Good" Can Do for You – Extra Classroom Funds from the Lottery

Presented By:

- David Workman, Public Information Specialist, Idaho Lottery

The Idaho Lottery has four “Do Good” programs that return extra dollars and supplies for individual classroom or school needs. Learn the inside tips to make a successful application, how to participate in the programs, and how to get extra funding for your school – up to \$10,000. From new books for the library to funding rockets for 5th grade science class, the Idaho Lottery awards over \$350,000 each year to teachers, librarians, and schools to fund those projects that make a difference for students. Find out how to get your school the extra funds it needs this year!

Legal Hot Topics

Presented By:

- Amy White, Partner, Anderson, Julian & Hull

Stay ahead of the curve on the latest legal issues affecting schools in Idaho and across the nation. In this session, an Idaho school law expert will break down current challenges, share practical strategies, and highlight key considerations for school board members and school leaders. This is your opportunity to get clear, informed answers and walk away better prepared to navigate complex legal situations with confidence.

The Important Process of Hiring Your Next Superintendent or Charter Administrator

Presented By:

- Katie Russell, Communications & Programs Specialist, ISBA

Selecting a superintendent or charter administrator is one of the most important decisions a board will make. This workshop will explain the superintendent search process, from identifying the necessary qualifications to advertising the position, gathering input from the community and staff, screening applicants, conducting interviews, and making the final

decision. The workshop will also cover Open Meeting Law and hiring best practices, aligning your board's priorities, FAQs, and key interview questions.

Beyond Compliance: What Every School Board Needs to Know About Suicide Prevention Planning

Presented By:

- Hannah Crumrine, Lead Coordinator, Student Well-being and Safety, Idaho Department of Education

Idaho Code §33-136(3)(a) requires every school district and public charter school to adopt a suicide prevention policy addressing prevention, intervention, and postvention. But what does meaningful board oversight actually look like? This session examines the statutory requirements, Idaho's Suicide-Safer Model Policy, and the board's role in ensuring policy translates into practice. Participants will learn where governance ends and implementation begins, identify common policy gaps, and discover the free training, resources, and technical assistance available to support their district. Attendees will leave with a practical self-assessment checklist to evaluate and strengthen their district's suicide prevention policy.

Beyond the Status Quo: How the Jerome School Board Is Rebuilding Trust and Moving the Needle

Presented By:

- Liz Bingham, Board Chair, Jerome SD #261
- Brent Johnson, Superintendent, Jerome SD #261

This session offers a real-world case study of how the Jerome School Board is actively confronting systemic challenges, rebuilding relationships with instructional staff, and aligning governance decisions with student achievement. Changing the status quo is tough and ongoing work, and this session is meant to be a real exploration of our struggles and successes. When a school board and superintendent break away from tradition and address institutional friction directly, meaningful transformation starts. Attendees will examine the practical policies, intentional communication strategies, and cultural shifts currently driving collaboration—and lay the foundation for measurable academic growth.

Same Students, Same Teachers, Better Results: Using Data and Relationships to Improve Outcomes in Idaho Schools

Presented By:

- Josh Omang, Associate Director of Engagement, BARR Center

- Dave Webster, Principal, Taylorview Middle School

As Idaho school boards and administrators work together to ensure that students and educators feel known, supported, and on a path to success, streamlined and effective systems help to accomplish these goals. One such system, the Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) model, has seen success around the United States. This model enables schools to identify student needs early, improve engagement, and create more connected and student-centered systems of support.

Join Taylorview Middle School Principal Dave Webster and BARR Center Associate Director of Engagement Josh Omang as they discuss their experiences implementing the BARR model. In this session, they will share how their district's decision to implement this model has improved collaboration, increased the efficient utilization of student data, and strengthened relationship-centered practices. Around the country, these changes have led to improved academic outcomes, reduced chronic absenteeism and failure rates, and increased teacher retention, ultimately providing students and teachers with the resources they need to thrive.

School Security- A Risk Management Perspective

Presented By:

- Chad Ranstrom, Senior Vice President, Moreton & Company

Keeping Idaho students and teachers safe is a primary concern for all who are involved in public education. In this workshop, we will look at historical data around school security and violent events on school campuses. We will review the pros and cons of various school security methods (SRO, private security, etc.) from a risk management perspective. Finally, we will discuss proactive prevention tools and considerations.

AI and K-12 Education

Presented By:

- Katie Bosch-Wilson, Coordinator, Computer Science and Emerging Technologies, Idaho Department of Education

Gain a practical overview of Idaho's evolving artificial intelligence landscape and what it means for Idaho's LEAs. This session will explore newly enacted 2026 AI legislation, compliance considerations, and the Idaho State Department of Education's statewide AI framework. Attendees will learn about available resources, professional learning opportunities, and implementation supports. Through real-world examples and interactive discussion, we will help board members and education leaders better understand

opportunities, risks, and next steps for responsible AI adoption. Participants will leave with actionable insights and time for questions and collaboration.

Build Your AI Agent: A Hands-On Board Member's AI Challenge.

Presented By:

- Steven Butschi, Director of Education Go-to-Market, Google

Explore the power of AI in education through this hands-on, interactive workshop. In this collaborative session, you'll design and experiment with data-protected AI-powered agents to tackle real-world board challenges, like researching key board votes, preparing board meeting summaries, onboarding new board members, and more.

Bridging the Disconnect: Overcoming Economic Hurdles and Public Disengagement to Fund Public Projects

Presented By:

- Michael Keith, Vice President, Zions Public Finance, Inc
- Amy Holly, Director, Strategic Communications, Portman Square Group

Why are bonds failing? We diagnose the "New Taxpayer"—a resident who is financially strained by inflation, skeptical of value, and treats property taxes like a Netflix subscription they're ready to cancel. We'll use data to show how the "K-Shaped Recovery" has left many families with flat or falling real wages, making them resistant to new taxes. Then, with Portman Square, we will provide a playbook for modern engagement strategies that can rebuild trust, transparently communicate needs, and successfully fund critical school projects in this challenging new environment.

From 46% to 66%: Reclaiming Community Trust and Passing A Supplemental Levy

Presented By:

- Alexa Griffin, Board Chair, Kellogg School District
- Lance Pearson, Superintendent, Kellogg School District
- Megan Bumgardner, Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk, Kellogg School District

When Kellogg School District's supplemental levy failed in November 2025, leadership realized that facts alone don't motivate voters. To secure a 66% landslide victory in May 2026, the district pivoted to a public relations campaign that balanced hard data with emotional connection. This session breaks down how we debunked tax misinformation while simultaneously tapping into community pride and voter "feelings" to drive turnout.

Learn a scalable, dual-approach toolkit that connects fiscal realities directly to the hearts of your community, turning public skepticism into passionate district support.

Hot Topics in School Policy

Presented By:

- April Hoy, Research & Policy Specialist, ISBA
- Jason Knopp, Director of Strategic Advocacy, ISBA

This will be an overview of policy topics that have recently been of interest to Idaho school boards. These include subjects of recent legislation -- like the new laws on local education associations, providing first aid to students, and electronic communications between students and staff -- and topics districts and charter schools frequently have questions on -- like generative AI tools and other emerging issues. We will give an overview of these topics and discuss ISBA's policy recommendations regarding them.

Bring Your Community Together Using Interest-Based Decision-Making

Presented By:

- Wendy Johnson, Superintendent, Boise School District
- Norm Stewart, Superintendent, Marsing School District
- Cassea Daugherty, Trustee, Marsing School District
- OJ Barber, Trustee, Marsing School District
- Debbie Donovan, Trustee, Boise School District

The workshop introduces Interest-Based Decision Making (IBDM) as a collaborative, problem-solving framework for school district leadership. The primary goal is to guide school boards, administration, and community stakeholders away from adversarial, positional debates and toward sustainable, "win/win" solutions for complex and contentious issues. Leaders from the Boise School District and the Marsing School District will share their experiences using this framework.

Guardians of Trust: Leveraging Ethical Resources in Education

Presented By:

- Cina Lackey, Director - Certification and Professional Standards, Idaho Department of Education
- Annette Schwab, Coordinator - Educator Ethics, Background Checks, Idaho Department of Education

- Victoria Del Toro, Coordinator - Certification and Professional Standards, Idaho Department of Education
- Lewis Coyne, Program Specialist - Educator Ethics, Background Checks, Idaho Department of Education

This session will provide an overview of laws pertaining to Idaho educator ethics that all local education agencies are required to adhere to. Knowledge is power; stay informed! Presenters will engage participants on newly developed free resources to help LEAs and educators navigate ethical dilemmas and avoid potential issues.

Beyond The Call: Creating a Culture of Trust and Service

Presented By:

- Jesse Howard, Keynote Speaker

Strong boards, effective superintendent/charter administrator relationships, and healthy leadership teams do not happen by accident. They are built through trust, communication, clarity, accountability, and a shared commitment to serving students and communities.

In this breakout session, Jesse Howard will take a deeper look at the leadership principles behind building a healthy team culture. Drawing from his Iowa Army National Guard leadership experience, lessons from his book *Beyond The Call: The Team BEAST Leadership Blueprint*, his service as President of the Iowa Association of School Boards, and his perspective as a father of Gen Z and Gen Alpha children, Jesse will share practical strategies school board members and superintendents can use to strengthen relationships, improve communication, and lead with purpose.

Participants will explore how leaders can build trust, model selfless service, invest in people, and create a culture that helps bridge generational communication gaps while preparing the next generation of leaders.

New Trustee Onboarding: Building a Strong Foundation from Day One

Presented By:

- Lara Stone, Board Chair, Blaine County SD #061
- Jim Foudy, Superintendent, Blaine County SD #061
- Adam Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, Blaine County SD #061

How do you set a new school board member up for success? Join this session to learn one district's step-by-step onboarding process, starting with the board clerk and chair to cover board meetings, policy development, and the budget, then moving through hands-on time

with the directors of Finance, Human Resources, Facilities, and the Superintendent. Walk away with a practical model for helping new board members understand where the board's role ends and administration begins.

Policy Management for School Board Clerks: Updating, Adopting, and Retention Best Practices

Presented By:

- Monica Pauley, Consultant, ISBA
- April Hoy, Policy & Research Specialist, ISBA

This session will provide board/charter clerks with practical guidance on the full policy lifecycle from initial drafting and board adoption to ongoing updates and long-term retention. Participants will learn how policies are properly introduced, revised, and approved in accordance with Idaho Open Meeting Law requirements, including noticing, agenda placement, and documentation of board action.

Strengthening Governance Through Transparency: Navigating Public Records Challenges with Confidence

Presented By:

- Monica Pauley, Consultant, ISBA
- Kelly Fisher, Clerk, Lake Pend Oreille SD #084

This session goes beyond basic public records compliance and focuses on complex, real-world scenarios clerks regularly face. Participants will explore handling video requests, mixed-content emails, social media records, and high-volume or politically sensitive requests. Emphasis will be placed on Idaho Public Records Act exemptions, FERPA intersections, and how to craft legally defensible responses.

Executive Session Governance Mastery: Navigating Idaho Code § 74-206 with Confidence and Compliance

Presented By:

- Monica Pauley, Consultant, ISBA
- Sharon Snider, Clerk, Boise, SD #001

This advanced session examines the complexities of Idaho Code § 74-206 and provides practical guidance on the most common executive session challenges facing school boards. Participants will review statutory requirements, allowable purposes, motion

procedures, minutes, confidentiality expectations, and the clerk's responsibilities before, during, and after executive session. Gain the knowledge and tools needed to confidently support your board and help safeguard the district from costly compliance mistakes.

The Board Agenda Blueprint: Creating, Managing, and Amending Agendas for Effective Governance

Presented By:

- Monica Pauley, Consultant, ISBA
- Nathan Weeks, Clerk, Highland SD #305

A well-designed agenda is the foundation of an effective and legally compliant board meeting. This session provides Idaho school board clerks with a comprehensive understanding of the agenda process from initial creation and structure to navigating changes and amendments. Participants will explore best practices for organizing agenda items, ensuring required information is included, supporting board transparency, and understanding when and how an agenda may be amended. Learn practical strategies to manage last-minute changes, support board leadership, and maintain compliance while keeping meetings focused and effective.

Keeping Your Board Out of Hot Water: Governance Pitfalls Every Clerk Should Recognize and Help Prevent

Presented By:

- Monica Pauley, Consultant, ISBA
- Tanna Wicks, Clerk, St. Maries #041
- Morgan Cenarrusa, Business Development Specialist, ISBA

We will discuss common legal and procedural risks that can place school boards in violation of Idaho Open Meeting Law and other governance requirements. Clerks will learn how to identify and prevent high-risk practices such as “daisy chain” email communications, serial communications between board members, and informal deliberation outside of publicly noticed meetings. The session will also cover other frequent compliance concerns, including improper use of emails or messaging apps for board discussion, inadvertent quorum violations, and unclear communication channels between board members and district/charter staff. We will focus on the clerk's role as a governance safeguard helping ensure transparency, proper documentation, and adherence to lawful decision-making processes.

Leading Beyond the Boardroom: How Rural Boards Turn Community Partnerships into Student Success

Presented By:

- Adam Percifield, School Board Member, Marsing SD #363
- Norm Stewart, Superintendent, Marsing SD #363
- Jackie Yarbrough, Senior Program Officer, Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health

How can a school board turn community needs into measurable student success, without losing sight of local control or fiscal responsibility? Using Marsing's Community School journey as a rural case study, Marsing School Board Member/COSSA Board Vice Chair, Adam Percifield, Superintendent Norm Stewart, and strategic partner Jackie Yarbrough will share how board leadership, student data, and community partnerships transformed an underused school building into The HUB, a center for student and family support. Participants will examine real decisions, discuss challenges with peers, and leave with a practical framework for identifying local barriers, building partnerships, setting accountability measures, and taking a first step in their own district.

Communicating with Patrons and the Media

Presented By:

- Jennifer Swindell, Editor, Idaho Education News

It's important for elected officials to be open and transparent with patrons, parents, and students. Our workshop will give you tips on how to control messaging so your community gets accurate and timely communication from its board. We'll also connect communication to Idaho's open meeting laws and access to public records.

Level Up: Fixing the Communication Systems Frustrating Your Families

Presented By:

- Greg Turchetta, Strategic Communications Advisor, Apptegy

Your families are trying to reach your district. Too often, your systems are making that harder than it should be. A parent needs an attendance answer. A new family needs enrollment information. Another just needs to know who to call. Too often, families hit phone trees, outdated pages, and unanswered inboxes, then stop trying. For superintendents, that is not just a communications issue. It affects trust, attendance, enrollment, and the overall experience families have with your district. This session gives district leaders a direct look at where family communication breaks down and why those

breakdowns carry real consequences for funding, absenteeism, community trust, and staff capacity. More importantly, it offers a practical path forward. You will explore how leading districts are moving beyond fragmented, one-way communication and building systems that make it easier for families to get answers, stay connected, and feel supported. You will leave with a clearer understanding of where your current communication systems create friction, and how better two-way communication can surface problems

The New Federal Tax Credit Scholarship is a Huge Opportunity for Public Schools

Presented By:

- Duncan Robb, Chief Strategy Officer, Bluum
- Terry Ryan, CEO, Bluum

Learn how the federal tax credit scholarship that goes into effect January 1, 2027, could benefit the students you serve, inject tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars into your school or district, and add millions of dollars across public education in Idaho. Bluum will serve as a scholarship granting organization to collect donations and distribute scholarships to students. Join us to understand the mechanics of the law, what Bluum is doing to take advantage, and what your school or district can do to be prepared.

Better Together: An Evidence-Informed Collaborative Approach to Youth Well-Being

Presented By:

- Megan Smith, Professor, Boise State University & Director, Communities for Youth
- Sydney Nickel, Regional Initiative Coordinator, Communities for Youth
- Andrea Hill, Community Engagement Coordinator, Communities for Youth

Upstream Prevention is a data-driven, evidence-informed approach that empowers school boards, parents, and civic leaders to proactively improve student outcomes. Rather than waiting for a crisis, Idaho-based "Communities for Youth" initiatives effectively build communities that improve youth well-being. The approach focuses on local control, allowing districts to address specific challenges with community-led solutions. By emphasizing protective factors and practical engagement, we move beyond reactive measures to create a stable, supportive environment for academic success. This presentation demonstrates how data-driven insights and local collaboration foster resilient communities and healthier student populations.

Idaho's Comprehensive Plans

Presented By:

- Karyn Kilpatrick-Snell, Program Manager - Literacy and Dyslexia, Idaho Department of Education
- Katie Bosch-Wilson, Coordinator - Computer Science and Emerging Technologies, Idaho Department of Education
- Gina Kwid, Coordinator - Mathematics, PE, Health, Idaho Department of Education

The Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan and Idaho Comprehensive Mathematics Plan provide statewide frameworks that support local decision-making and continuous improvement. This session will provide school board trustees, superintendents, and district leaders with an overview of each plan, including its purpose, key priorities, and role in improving student outcomes. Participants will explore how the plans align with strategic planning, educator development, evidence-based instruction, and district improvement efforts. Leave with a clear understanding of how these frameworks can help strengthen teaching, learning, and student achievement across Idaho.

Explore and compare your school data

Presented By:

- Jennifer Swindell, Journalist and data analyst, Idaho Education News

Accurate and timely data is available so you can make data-driven decisions. We will show you easy-to-access and user-friendly data sets. We have the numbers from pay rates and levy rates to math and reading scores. Find out where your school ranks.

Assessment Oversight, Simplified: What Boards Need to Know

Presented By:

- Amber Van Vooren, Interim and Formative Assessment Coordinator, Idaho Department of Education
- Samantha Thompson, Accountability Coordinator, Idaho Department of Education

School boards across Idaho are asking the same questions about assessment data — is it useful, are we testing too much, and how do we compare to similar districts and charters? Drawing on recent statewide research, this session helps board members know where to focus their oversight, and what questions to ask their district or charter school leaders. We'll explore what a balanced assessment system looks like, available tools for reviewing and strengthening local assessment practices, and how to find and understand your own

district or charter school's data — including how it compares to similar districts and charters across the state.

School Financing 101

Presented By:

- David Mortoz, Assistant Superintendent and Business Office Manager, Fremont County SD #215

This is a visual and great discussion about the funding of Idaho public schools. Understand where the money is coming from and how it must/can be used.

Wait, What? You Are Arming Staff Members?

Presented By:

- Luke Schroeder, Superintendent, Kimberly SD #414

This session highlights how a school district once opposed to arming staff used analysis of time and response realities to guide decision-making. The result was a data-driven program to train selected staff.

The Top Ten Questions Every School Board Should Ask About School Safety and Security

Presented By:

- James Mitchell, Chief Training Officer, Panacea S.A.F.E. Schools
- Amy Schell, Founder and President, Foundation for Safer Schools

School safety is a governance responsibility, and the most powerful tool a board member has is the right question. This session equips board members with ten specific, plain-language questions to ask their superintendent about safety and security, from "Show me our safety scorecard" to "What changed after our last drill?" Each question comes with a concrete Board Action prompt covering safety plans and Idaho Code compliance, first responder coordination, resource allocation, mental health and threat assessment, crisis communication, drills, physical security, training for every role in the building, and community voice.

What makes this session different is that attendees will see the questions proven in practice. Presenters will walk through a real lockdown event at St. Maries School District #41, a small, rural Idaho district in Year Two of the Panacea S.A.F.E. Schools partnership: what the plan looked like when it was tested, what the after-action review found, and what

changed as a result. Attendees will hear directly from the St. Maries community, including a building principal and a parent, about what preparation meant when it mattered.

Board members then apply the ten questions to their own district in a guided table group exercise and leave with a quick reference question card, a five-step board action checklist, and a funding roadmap. Programs in this model are delivered at no cost to districts and funded through grants. The partnership has helped bring more than \$300,000 in grant funding to Idaho schools.

The New Blueprint for IDLA

Presented By:

- Jeff Simmons, Superintendent, Idaho Digital Learning Alliance
- Jeff Farden, Director of Supervision and Instruction, Idaho Digital Learning Alliance

Idaho Digital Learning Alliance (IDLA) is Idaho's state virtual program. The 2026 Idaho Legislative session changed our scope. This session will review the new IDLA blueprint. We will share what we will stop, what we will reduce, and where we will refocus during the 26-27 school year.

Attendees will come away with an understanding of IDLA's course fees, courses IDLA will prioritize, and the steps IDLA is taking to create sustainability. Attendees will also be provided with data from the Summer and Fall 2026 sessions and understand the impact of recent legislation on the IDLA program and what support they can provide IDLA during the 2027 Idaho Legislative Session.

Hot Topics: Idaho High School Activities Association (IHSAA)

Presented By:

- Chad Williams, Executive Director, Idaho High School Activities Association

Chad Williams, Executive Director of the Idaho High School Activities Association, will present to Idaho school administrators on legislative concerns, classification, representation, playoff formats, transfer rules, and girls' wrestling expansion.

Beyond the Classroom: Schools as Trusted Access Points for Youth and Family Support

Presented By:

- Casie Jones, Resource Development Specialist, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Chenele Dixon, Former Teacher, Former Legislator, Advocate, Idaho Behavioral Health Council

What do Idaho youth and families really need to thrive—and how can schools help connect them to support without taking on another program? This interactive session will explore data on the challenges affecting youth well-being and success, including financial and future stability, social isolation, substance use, mental health, and unmet family needs. Participants will learn how schools can serve as trusted access points within the Idaho Community Resource Network (ICRN), creating clearer pathways to community-based resources and upstream supports. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for strengthening connections between schools, families, and communities while supporting prevention, student well-being, and long-term success.

Not One-Size-Fits-All: Governance in Small Schools

Presented By:

- Natayla Peet, Board Member, Peace Valley
- Sita Chiang, Charter Administrator, Peace Valley
- Craig Gerard, Charter Administrator, Blackfoot Charter
- Janelle Hill, Board Chair, Blackfoot Charter

Small schools have unique governance needs that can be overlooked when governance guidance is developed primarily around larger districts and school systems. In a small school, board members and administrators often work more closely and collaboratively, with a greater level of day-to-day communication and shared responsibility.

This interactive roundtable brings together administrators and board members from small schools to explore what makes these relationships successful. Participants will share experiences, discuss the balance between governance and administration, and explore how boards can make informed decisions while valuing the professional expertise and experience of their administrators. The goal is not to provide a one-size-fits-all model, but to create a collaborative conversation about what effective governance looks like in a small-school environment.

Best Practices in Communicating Charter Information Between Administrator and Board

Presented By:

- Anne Ritter, Board Chair, Meridian Medical Arts Charter School & ISBA Consultant
- Benjamin Merrill, Charter Administrator, Meridian Medical Arts Charter School

Effective communication between charter school administrators and their governing boards is essential to building trust, maintaining strong governance, and keeping the school moving in the same direction. This workshop explores best practices for sharing information, establishing clear communication expectations, and ensuring the board has the information it needs to fulfill its governance responsibilities. Special attention will be given to the unique metrics, accountability requirements, and operational situations charter directors and administrators should monitor and communicate—including academic performance, enrollment, finances, authorizer expectations, charter compliance, and progress toward the school’s mission and performance goals. Participants will examine common communication challenges, strategies for building productive board-administrator relationships, and practical ways to improve communication before, during, and between board meetings.

Charter Administrator Evaluation

Presented By:

- Anne Ritter, Board Chair, Meridian Medical Arts Charter School & ISBA Consultant

Evaluating a charter school administrator is one of the board’s most important—and often most challenging—governance responsibilities. In many Idaho charter schools, the administrator serves in multiple leadership capacities, frequently fulfilling the responsibilities of both a superintendent and a principal. This workshop explores best practices for conducting an effective, meaningful, and fair evaluation that reflects the full scope of this complex role. Participants will discuss establishing clear expectations and goals, using evaluation criteria aligned with the school’s mission and priorities, distinguishing governance-level leadership from day-to-day administrative responsibilities, providing ongoing feedback, and using evaluation results to support leadership development and school improvement. The session will also address common evaluation challenges and practical strategies for making the process productive for both the governing board and charter administrator.

Two Handbooks, A Unified Leadership System: Clarifying Board and Administrator Roles

Presented By:

- Joel Lovstedt, Charter Administrator, The Academy Public Charter School

The session explores a paired-handbook model in which a Board Handbook clarifies governance practices and an Administrative Handbook addresses delegated authority and

implementation. An alignment crosswalk connects the two by defining who decides, recommends, is consulted, and is informed in recurring areas such as agenda development, information requests, complaints, policy implementation, emergency decisions, evaluation, and leadership transitions.

The session provides board members and administrators with a practical framework for improving role clarity, communication, continuity, and board-superintendent alignment. Participants will receive an adaptable handbook architecture and alignment-crosswalk tool for use in their own districts or charter schools.

Fewer Students, Tighter Budgets: A Board Finance Cheat Sheet for the Long Game

Presented By:

- Scott Brown, President, EdFinMN, Charter Impact
- Annabel Esparza, Director of Client Finance, Charter Impact
- Joseph Schmelzle, Charter Impact

When enrollment and attendance decline and funding remains uncertain, boards need more than accurate reports. They need to know which numbers matter, what warning signs to watch, and which questions support sustainable long-term decisions. This interactive session gives board members a practical finance cheat sheet, five questions to ask in every budget conversation, and a framework for testing financial sustainability under changing assumptions. Participants will work through a realistic scenario and leave with a board-ready tool they can use to evaluate financial health, protect operating margin, and guide multi-year planning.

Newly Elected ISBA Executive Board Members & Alternates

Presented By:

- Misty Swanson, Executive Director, ISBA

If you were just elected to ISBA's Executive Board as a chair, vice chair, or alternate during your Region Meeting, then this workshop is a must for you! This workshop will provide a preliminary orientation of what it means to be an ISBA Executive Board member or Alternate, including your responsibilities, resources ISBA provides, your representation on a regional and statewide basis, and more!

Grievance Policy: Handling Complaints & Appeals to the Board

Presented By:

- Anne Ritter, Board Chair, Meridian Medical Arts Charter School & ISBA Consultant

Patrons, students, and staff may sometimes seek board review of decisions made by a superintendent or other administrator. This workshop provides practical guidance on when an administrative decision may be appealed to the board and what a fair, orderly appeal process should look like. Participants will examine the role of board policy, requirements for following the chain of command and exhausting administrative remedies, timelines and documentation, notice to affected parties, and opportunities for each party to be heard. The workshop will also address how trustees can protect due process, confidentiality, impartiality, and compliance with Idaho's Open Meeting Law. Participants will learn how to avoid prejudging an appeal or conducting independent investigations while ensuring the board receives an appropriate record and follows a consistent process before reaching a decision.

From Wish List to Roadmap: A Board's Guide to Long-Term Facility and Financial Planning

Presented By:

- Craig Miller, Charter Administrator, Meridian Technical Charter High School
- Christine Stoll, VP Strategy and Market Development, Clearwater Financial

Facility decisions can shape a school's finances, programs, and students' experience for decades. This interactive session gives board members a practical framework for connecting educational goals, facility needs, community input, project costs, and funding capacity before committing to a capital project. Using Meridian Technical Charter High School's long-term planning process as a case study, presenters will show how the school evaluated growth, tested facility scenarios, balanced priorities with affordability, and developed a phased roadmap. Attendees will leave with questions, tools, and next steps they can apply in districts and charter schools of any size.

Inside the Audit: What Board Members Need to Know

Presented By:

- Jonathan Gillen, Charter Impact

An annual audit can be intimidating, but board members don't need to be accountants to understand their role in the process. This workshop will provide an overview of what an audit is, why it matters, and what board members should look for when reviewing audit results. Participants will learn about the auditor's role, common findings, and red flags, and how to ask informed questions about their school's financial health. The session will also explore the board's responsibilities before, during, and after an audit and how audit results can help strengthen financial oversight and accountability.

Building Idaho's Healthcare Workforce: Leveraging CTE Pathways and Grant Funding for Impact

Presented By:

- Jackie Yarbrough, Senior Program Officer, Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health
- Brian Smith, Principal / Paradise Creek Regional High School, District Coordinator / Career Technical Education & Community Schools, Moscow SD #281

Idaho faces a critical shortage of healthcare workers—and Career Technical Education (CTE) is a key part of the solution. The session will showcase effective program models, funding strategies, and approaches for building sustainable, high-quality pathways aligned with workforce demands, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Attendees will leave with practical insights on accessing funding, strengthening community and industry partnerships, and developing impactful Health Professions programs that improve student outcomes while addressing Idaho's healthcare workforce needs.

Participants in this session will learn about grant opportunities from the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health that support the launch or expansion of Health Professions CTE programs (Dental Assisting, EMT, Nursing Assistant, Medical Assisting, Pharmacy Technician, and Rehabilitation Services).

Youth Apprenticeships for All: Turning Work-Based Learning Into Nationally Recognized Credentials

Presented By:

- Megan Simila, VP of Apprenticeship, Idaho Business for Education

What if students could graduate high school with a nationally recognized credential, real work experience, and money already in their pockets? Registered apprenticeships make that possible, and this session shows you how to build one in your community. The session will focus on three case studies: Kuna School District, ELEVATE Academy, and Soda Springs High School to highlight that apprenticeship can work in any community, regardless of size or budget. It will also discuss sponsorship sticking points and how to overcome them with STRAP agreements and the group sponsorship model. Come learn how youth apprenticeship can work for all!

Keeping the Plan Alive: How Boards Monitor What Matters

Presented By:

- Charlie Rigby, Business Development Manager, Simbli by eBOARDsolutions
- Mark Willis, Chief Operating Officer, Simbli by eBOARDsolutions
- Jesse Howard, Business Development Representative, Simbli by eBOARDsolutions

For a school board, a strategic plan is more than a vision statement—it is the framework for governance, accountability, and improved student outcomes. The board’s role is not to manage the work, but to ensure progress, alignment, and results. This session will focus on how boards can use Simbli to strengthen oversight of the strategic plan. Participants will explore how to align board goals with district priorities, monitor measurable outcomes, review progress reports efficiently, and ensure that resources and initiatives remain aligned to adopted strategic priorities.

When Public Comment Becomes Public Conflict: Communication Strategies to deal with Persistent Complaints and Social Media Pressure

Presented By:

- Eva Craner, Director of Public Relations, Twin Falls SD #411

School boards have a responsibility to listen to their communities, but some situations become especially challenging when individuals repeatedly bring the same concerns to board meetings, attack staff or trustees publicly, use social media to amplify disputes, or attempt to pressure the board into bypassing established processes. This workshop will help Idaho school board members distinguish between legitimate public criticism—which is an important part of representative governance—and behavior that can disrupt meetings, undermine established complaint procedures, damage employee morale, or distract the board from its broader responsibilities.

Your Voice Matters: Advocacy in Action

Presented By:

Jason Knopp, Director of Strategic Advocacy
Katie Russell, Communications & Program Specialist

School board members bring an important local perspective to the legislative process, but effective advocacy requires more than sending a form email. This interactive workshop will introduce ISBA’s new legislative advocacy platform and show members how to identify important legislation, connect with the right legislators, and personalize their outreach. Participants will also learn how to build a clear three-minute advocacy message using a local story, a key fact, and a specific request. Attendees will leave better prepared to advocate for their students, schools, and communities during the legislative session.

Talking Dollars Without Losing Cents

Presented By:

- Eva Craner, Director of Public Relations, Twin Falls SD #411

School finance doesn't have to be confusing. In this session, school leaders will learn how to communicate financial information in ways that are clear, consistent, and connected to district priorities. We'll explore how to tie funding messages to your district's brand, simplify complex topics for broader understanding, and build community trust by making financial transparency part of your regular communication, not just when you're asking for support.