



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Thomas R. Bice
State Superintendent
of Education

December 5, 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents

FROM: Thomas R. Bice *TRB*
State Superintendent of Education

RE: Mandated Board Member Training for 2013

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State Board
of Education

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Alabama's *School Board Governance Improvement Act of 2012* charges the State Superintendent of Education with developing a program of orientation and ongoing training for school board members. The Act became effective this spring and received pre-clearance from the U.S. Justice Department in August. The goal of the training – and in large measure the Act— is to strengthen each board member's skills and the skills of each board team to ensure effective governance that promotes student achievement and fiscal accountability.

The guidelines for the training, detailed here, emphasize a strong orientation in the role and responsibilities of school board members, but provide much flexibility in the ongoing training requirements. With the exception of the orientation courses, travel outside the school system is not required under the Act. The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is working with the Alabama Association of School Boards (AASB) so the orientation courses will be offered on-line. In addition, a portion of the ongoing mandatory training must involve the full board in an interactive session to promote a shared understanding of issues.

These training requirements go into effect January 1, 2013. The ongoing training requirements for six hours per year will be based on the scholastic year (July 1 – June 30) and credit will not be carried over. **However, this year only, the requirement will be for three hours of training before July 1.** These guidelines will be discussed in detail during an upcoming Webinar January 16, hosted by the ALSDE and AASB. The AASB will be providing you with additional information on the Webinar during which you will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Deputy State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Craig Pouncey, at the time. The guidelines are:

Annual Training:

- From January 1, 2013, to June 30, 2013, every school board member must attend at least three hours of training.
- Effective July 1, 2013, all members must complete six hours of training annually from July 1 to June 30.
- At least two of the required six hours must be whole board, interactive training, which is defined as "A training session attended by at least the majority of the members of a school board during which the trainer or facilitator interacts directly with the board and members discuss an issue or issues specifically as they pertain to the board or system."
- To qualify as credit-hours under the *School Board Governance Improvement Act of 2012*, a training session must either be provided by the AASB or approved in advance through an application process administered by AASB.

- Credit-hours will only be awarded for training that is instate and Alabama-specific; attendance at regional and national conferences will not qualify.
- Training may be done in any of a variety of formats, including conferences, workshops, retreats, Webinars, and online courses.
- Credit-hours only apply in the year in which they were earned; they will not accrue from year to year. A record of each individual's training hours will be maintained by AASB.
- Hardship exceptions to the orientation requirement must be approved by the State Superintendent of Education on a case-by-case basis.

Orientation Training:

- All school board members must complete an orientation, with courses covering the roles and responsibilities of the board; finance; ethics; board meetings; legal and personnel issues; advocacy; the Governance Act; student and school performance; working with the board attorney and superintendent; and public/media relations.
- Members taking office for the first time on or after January 1, 2013, have one year from the July following their election or appointment to complete the orientation requirement. However, board members are strongly encouraged to take the orientation as soon as practicable following their election or appointment and may do so prior to taking office.
- Any currently serving school board member who has already taken both of AASB's orientation courses will be deemed to have met the orientation requirement.
- Currently serving board members who have not completed the full 12 hours of orientation must do so upon their re-election or reappointment as a board member. They will have one year from the July following their re-election or reappointment for completion of the orientation.
- To qualify as credit-hours under the *School Board Governance Improvement Act of 2012*, a training session must be provided by the AASB or approved in advance through an application process administered by AASB.
- Hardship exceptions to the orientation training requirements will be approved by the State Superintendent of Education on a case-by-case basis.
- Training must be instate and Alabama-specific.
- Training may be done in any of a variety of formats, including conferences, workshops, retreats, Webinar, and online courses.

Training topics will be determined annually and will be based on current educational issues as well as other identifiable needs that can contribute to the proper governance and management of our public schools throughout the state.

TRB:LAK

cc: City and County School Board Members
Alabama Association of School Boards

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