

ADVISER

What Would You Do If ...

A board member wanted the board to use tablets instead of computers?

A board member brought an idea to his colleagues at a work session: He had heard that a couple of nearby school districts had purchased portable tablet devices for their board members to use at meetings and for district business. Some board members were concerned, however, at the message such a purchase would send to the community, since most of the schools in the district did not have mobile devices for their teachers or students. These board members thought the students and teachers should have the technology first. The board member who brought up the idea said that the purchase would save time and money

for the district, and the board would be setting a good example of technology use for the rest of the district. What should this board do?

■ The first question I would ask is “What are you going to use the tablets for?” There are a number of districts that employ electronic agendas that board members (and the public) can use to access board packets digitally. In a case like that, it might make sense for board members to have access to some form of electronic device to access it. Some districts use school computers/laptops just for the meeting, reallocated from classroom use during the day. A few districts distribute laptops/tablets to board members. The savings from such electronic agendas often save the district enough money to purchase the equipment. I would be careful to ensure the district’s acceptable use policies include the use of devices by board of education members to ensure they are being use appropriately for board business and not board members’ personal use.

Nicholas D. Caruso Jr., Senior Staff Associate for Field Services and Technology, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

■ We all need to examine our current practices, look beyond ourselves, and learn from others. Kudos to the board member who connects with other boards and brings good ideas back to his colleagues for discussion. In the end, however, the full board decides how it wants to conduct itself. As the governing body, the board of education must own its meeting agenda, format, and processes. The politically savvy board will consider community perception as a part of its decision. As for the use of tablets, I’m sure all parties can come to some consensus around the values of meeting efficiency and public perception.

*Dean Langdon,
Director of Field Services, Illinois
Association of School Boards*

Advice for the asking: If you are plagued with a prickly problem of school board service or school governance, ask *ASBJ*. We’ll change the names of persons and places. Then, we’ll describe the problem and its suggested solution for our readers. Write: Adviser, *American School Board Journal*, 1680 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Or send us an e-mail at adviser@asbj.com, marked “Adviser.” Adviser does not represent official policy of the National School Boards Association, nor should it be construed as legal advice.



Paul Zwolak