



**Foundation Innovation, LLC**  
**Alexandria City Public Schools – School Board Governance Training**

OCTOBER 25  
2016

2-Hour  
Leadership Session

OCTOBER - Leadership  
Overview of Previous Board Governance Training  
Overview of Concerns and Scope of Work  
Discussion of Board/Superintendent Relations  
Overview of Board Operating  
Preparation for November School Board Retreat

NOVEMBER 18  
2016

3-Hour School Board  
and Superintendent  
Session

NOVEMBER - Board  
Review of Effective School Boards  
Discussion of Board Member Roles and Responsibilities  
Role of the School Board Related to Student Achievement  
Open Discussion

DECEMBER 13  
2016

2-Hour  
Leadership Session

DECEMBER - Leadership  
Overview of School Board Retreat  
Discussion of Concerns  
Discussion of Basic Board Training  
Preparation for January School Board Retreat

JANUARY 6  
2017

3-Hour School Board  
and Superintendent  
Session

JANUARY - Board  
Board Training 101 - What is Boardmanship and How  
School Board Operate  
Overview of Parliamentary Procedure  
Overview of Board Operating Procedures Areas to  
Develop  
Discussion of Communication Procedures  
Discussion of Request for Information



**Foundation Innovation, LLC**  
**Alexandria City Public Schools – School Board Governance Training**

February 3  
2017

2-Hour  
Leadership Session

FEBRUARY - Leadership  
Overview of School Board Retreat  
Overview of Timeline  
Discussion and Review of Progress  
Discussion of Draft Board Operating Procedures  
Discussion of Board Assessment and Evaluation Document  
Preparation of March School Board Retreat

March 16  
2017

3-Hour School Board  
and Superintendent  
Session

MARCH - Board  
Review of Timeline and Progress  
Overview of Board Governance  
Review of Draft Board Operating Procedures  
Continued Discussion of Board Operating Procedures  
Overview of Board Assessment  
Discussion of Board Assessment Document

April  
2017

2-Hour  
Leadership Session

APRIL - Leadership  
Overview of School Board Retreat  
Overview of Board Operating Procedures Document  
Overview of Board Assessment Document  
Preparation for May School Board Retreat

May  
2017

3-Hour School Board  
and Superintendent  
Session

MAY – Board  
Finalize Board Operating Procedures  
Finalize Assessment Document  
Next Steps for School Board Governance



**Foundation Innovation, LLC**  
**Alexandria City Public Schools – School Board Governance Training**



Future

- FUTURE – Considerations
- Launch Board Assessment Document
- Compile and Review Results of Board Assessment
- Define Strategies to Address Deficiencies and Celebrate Successes
- Monitor Assessment Strategies
- Determine Onboarding New School Board Candidates and Members
- Streamline School Board Calendar and Agenda
- Conduct Workshop for New School Board Candidates
- Conduct New School Board Member Orientation – Every 3 Years

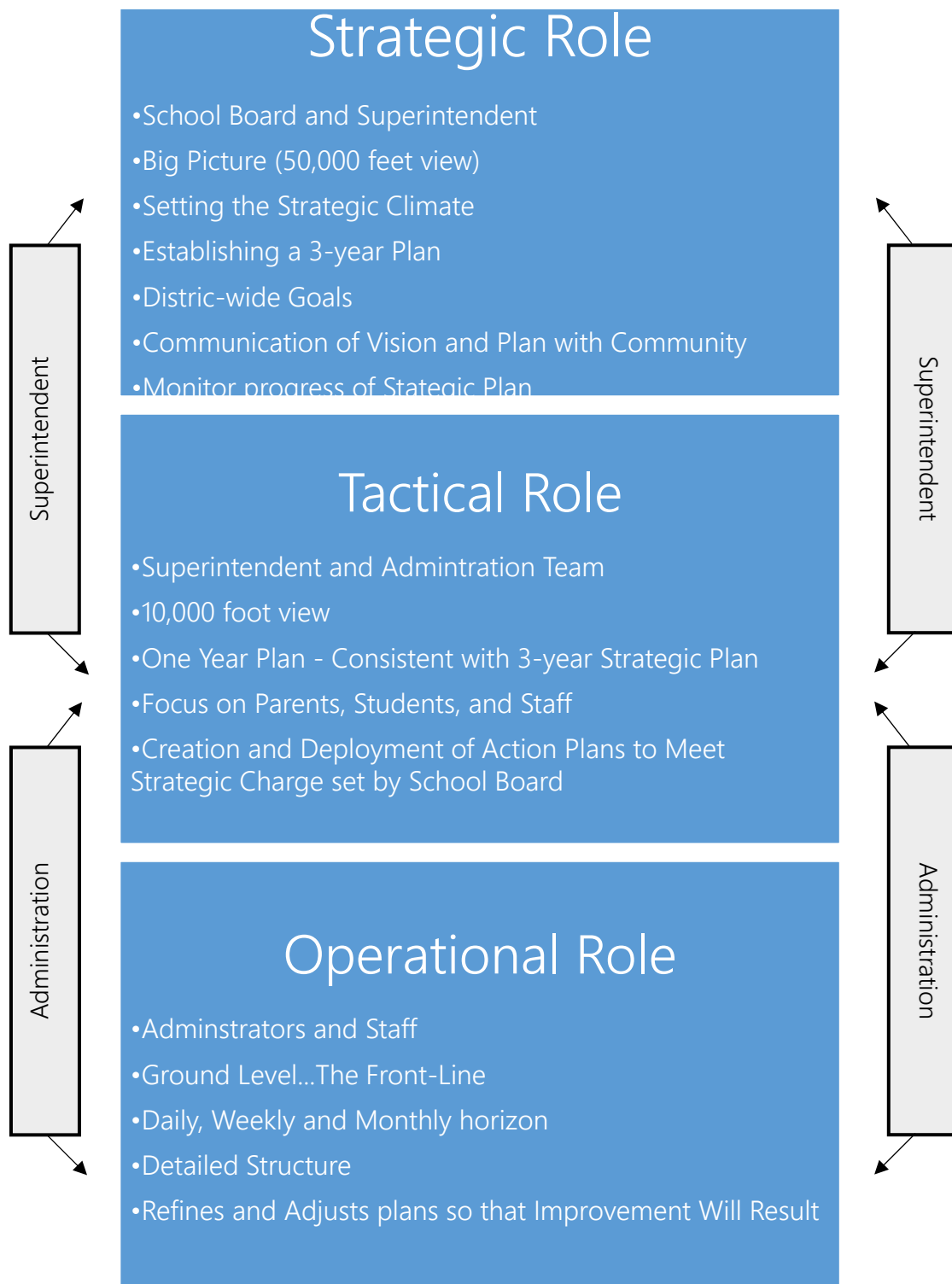


<i>Mission</i>	Every student succeeds: Educating lifelong learners and inspiring civic responsibility.
<i>Vision</i>	<p>Our students achieve at high levels, are well-rounded, critical thinkers, and have a passion to learn.</p> <p>ACPS has an engaging and collaborative climate that promotes ethical behavior and values diversity.</p> <p>ACPS is a vital part of the fabric of our community, and Alexandria residents and businesses take pride in our schools.</p>
<i>Principles</i>	<p>We Believe In Educational Excellence</p> <p>We Believe In High Achievement for All</p> <p>We Believe In a Culture of Collaboration</p> <p>We Believe In Continuous Improvement and Accountability</p> <p>We Believe In Environmental Stewardship</p>
<i>Goals</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b><u>Academic Excellence and Educational Equity:</u></b> Every student will be academically successful and prepared for life, work, and college.</li><li>2. <b><u>Family and Community Engagement:</u></b> ACPS will partner with families and the community in the education of Alexandria's youth.</li><li>3. <b><u>An Exemplary Staff:</u></b> ACPS will recruit, develop, support, and retain a staff that meets the needs of every student.</li><li>4. <b><u>Facilities and the Learning Environment:</u></b> ACPS will provide optimal and equitable learning environments.</li><li>5. <b><u>Health and Wellness:</u></b> ACPS will promote efforts to enable students to be healthy and ready to learn.</li><li>6. <b><u>Effective and Efficient Operations:</u></b> ACPS will be efficient, effective, and transparent in its business operations.</li></ol>



Alexandria City Public Schools

# Roles of School Division for Effective Governance



TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL

# INSIGHT

WINTER 2015

TASA's 2015 Outstanding School Board

Cypress-Fairbanks ISD Board of Trustees



TASA  
School Board  
awards





## GOOD GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

### 10 steps to improving governance in your school district

Greg Gibson

The purpose of this article is not (necessarily) to boast about what we've accomplished. The purpose is to outline an approach that others could replicate. I hope that our experience can demonstrate that good governance is still possible.

I see headlines every day with "Boards Gone Bad" and am so saddened by underperforming school districts and micromanaging school boards that do not understand the difference between governance and day-to-day management.

Our "Team of Eight" in Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD (SCUCISD) is concluding a 36-month cycle of refinement that has resulted in a much clearer definition of governance. Simply put, governance is the "oversight of management," which is clearly not the same as management.

This transformation was not easy. It took hard work, but the view was and is definitely worth the climb. I'm also not so naïve as to believe that "I" have done this or that "the board" has done this. The truth is that we did this as a team through months of collaboration and taking time to build honest relationships.

The purpose of this article is not (necessarily) to boast about what we've accomplished. The purpose is to outline an approach that others could replicate. I hope that our experience can demonstrate that good governance is still possible.

There is nothing extraordinary about our team. We are average people who are committed to excellence and believe that a clear definition of governance is critical to success. It has been said that a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. I believe there are 10 steps to improving governance in your organization.

#### 1. Start With a Clean Slate.

We literally wiped the slate clean and started over with our board master calendar. This step may be difficult, but it is a powerful way to demonstrate the commitment to a new approach. Essentially, we started with a *new* master calendar that *only* included items that trustees must consider or approve according to statute. We dropped all other items that had been added to the calendar for any non-statutory reason (i.e., board member preference).

Initially, our monthly meetings went from four or five hours down to one to two hours as a result. The bottom line is that there were many items on the monthly meeting agenda that were included because "that was the way we've always done it." This action allowed for our board master calendar to better reflect our new "Good Governance" model.

#### 2. Clearly Define Governance and Keep It Separate From Management.

We created the following definition of governance: The term "governance" refers to the system of management and controls exercised in the stewardship of an organization and includes the responsibilities of the governing body. A high-performing governance team works to ensure (1) accountability to stakeholders, (2) transparency of operations, and (3) fair treatment of all stakeholders.

Governance processes may include the approval of strategic direction, policy creation and enforcement, the monitoring and evaluation of senior leaders' performance, the establishment of senior leaders' compensation and benefits, succession planning, financial auditing, and risk management. Ensuring effective governance is important to stakeholders, the larger society's trust, and to organizational effectiveness. We developed a "good governance" model based on this definition .

### 3. Get Clarity on What Is Required by Law.

Texas state law includes "The Board shall" and "The Board may" statements. As part of the clean slate, we initially utilized only "The Board shall" statements from state law. In the future, new items will be added to the board master calendar, but only if all members of our team of eight reach consensus that it should be added. "The Board shall" statements from Texas statute are as follows:

#### The Board shall...

1. Seek to establish working relationships with other public entities to make effective use of community resources and to serve the needs of public school students in the community.
2. Adopt a vision statement and comprehensive goals for the District and the Superintendent, and monitor progress toward those goals.
3. Establish performance goals for the District concerning the academic and fiscal performance indicators under Education Code Chapter 39, Subchapters C, D, and J, and any performance indicators adopted by the District.
4. Ensure that the Superintendent is accountable for achieving performance results, recognizes performance accomplishments, and takes action as necessary to meet performance goals.

5. Collaborate with the Superintendent as set forth under Education Code 11.1512(b).
6. Adopt a policy to establish a district- and campus-level planning and decision-making process as required under Education Code 11.251.
7. Publish an annual educational performance report as required under Education Code 39.306.
8. Adopt an annual budget for the District as required under Education Code 44.004.
9. Adopt a tax rate each fiscal year as required by Tax Code 26.05.
10. Monitor District finances to ensure that the Superintendent is properly maintaining the District's financial procedures and records.
11. Ensure that District fiscal accounts are audited annually as required by Education Code 44.008.
12. Publish an end-of-year financial report for distribution to the community.
13. Conduct elections as required by law.
14. By rule, adopt a process through which District personnel, students or the parents/guardians of students and members of the public may obtain a hearing from the District administrators and the Board regarding a complaint.
15. Make decisions relating to terminating or non-renewing the employment of District employees employed under a contract to which Education Code Chapter 21 applies, including terminating or not renewing an employment contract to which that chapter applies.
16. Select the internal auditor if the District employs an internal auditor. The internal auditor shall report directly to the Board. *Education Code 11.170*
17. Adopt a policy providing for the employment and duties of District personnel. *Education Code 11.1513*

18. Limit redundant requests for information and the number and length of written reports that a classroom teacher is required to prepare. The Board shall review paperwork requirements imposed on classroom teachers and transfer to existing non-instructional staff a reporting task that can reasonably be accomplished by that staff. *Education Code 11.164*
19. Carry out other powers and duties as provided by the Education Code or other law. *Education Code 11.1511(b), except as noted*

The bottom line is that these and only these form the basis to the new board master calendar, once the previous calendar is abandoned (step one).

### 4. Be Clear About Board Processes Versus Staff Processes.

Everything we do in any organization is a process. In schools, however, we rarely take time to list (much less analyze) our processes. In SCUCISD, we have outlined approximately 75 key processes for district staff. Additionally, we have clearly outlined the key processes that trustees are the "primary owners." We define "primary ownership" of processes as being responsible for 50 percent (or more) of the key steps in a particular process.

One of the biggest moments in our transition to good governance was when one of our trustees declared (in a public meeting), "Just because we (the board) own the first and last step does not mean we own the whole process." He was absolutely correct, and this statement was a tangible way for staff members to see the board's commitment to good governance. Following this model, our trustees are primary owners of 10 (of approximately 75) district key processes. The 10 board processes are:

- 1.1 Adopt board policy.
- 1.2 Develop and deploy board committee structure.



- 1.3 Develop, adopt and monitor board code of ethics and individual trustee authority.
- 1.4 Develop mission and goals for board of trustees.
- 1.5 Monitor management's progress toward state and federal academic and fiscal accountability.
- 1.6 Evaluate performance of superintendent and board of trustees and establish senior leader appraisal instruments.
- 1.7 Develop and maintain board operating procedures that include transparency in operations and independence in external audits.
- 1.8 Develop and maintain board master calendar.
- 1.9 Ensure board of trustees exceeds annual continuing education training hours as outlined in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC).
- 1.10 Conduct trustee elections.

Our working definition of "key" processes is as follows: Key processes are the most important elements or factors that are critical to achieving the intended outcomes and are most important to organizational success. Key processes are the essential elements for pursuing or monitoring desired outcomes.

### 5. Develop a Clear, Transparent, and Viable Board Master Calendar.

We define the components as follows:

Clear = easily understood by a "non-educator" stakeholder.

Transparent = posted on the district website in multiple locations.

Viable = under constant review and updated regularly. We house the board master calendar on the SCUCISD website (see it at <http://goo.gl/jfXWyT>) and constantly accept feedback. This level of

transparency and agility has proven critical to success.

### 6. Develop Board Operating Guidelines.

We are committed to clear, transparent, viable board operating guidelines (same definitions as above). Similar to our board master calendar, SCUCISD used a clean-slate philosophy with this document as well, in that we scrapped the previous board operating guidelines and started over. We benchmarked against other high-performing school districts in creation of our new operating guidelines. The major categories are as follows:

- A. Duties of the Board: Govern the District
- B. Evaluation of the Board and Superintendent
- C. Duties of the Superintendent: Manage the District
- D. Board Meetings
- E. Board Officers
- F. Board Training
- G. Board Policies
- H. Addressing Public Concerns Outside of the Board Room
- I. Board Member Requests for Information or Report
- J. Board Member Visits to Campuses and District Facilities
- K. Reviewing Board Operating Procedures

There is no silver bullet for board operating guidelines other than the notion that they should be under constant review, amended as necessary, and posted on the district website.

### 7. Be Clear About Complaint Management Procedures.

For some reason, all of the best systems in the world are susceptible to breaking down once a complaint is introduced. My guess is that the emotion of the complaint trumps all of the planning and puts

strain on existing procedures. We worked through several cycles of refinement before settling on the following process for complaint management (copied directly from the current SCUCISD Board Operating Guidelines):

### Addressing Public Concerns Outside of the Board Room

"Board Members are sometimes confronted with individuals who wish to voice their concerns or complaints outside of the board room. Trustees should listen to the individual's concerns but politely explain the chain of command for addressing complaints and direct the individual to communicate concerns to the superintendent. The superintendent will then redirect the individual to the appropriate district employee. Most often when the individual understands who to request information from, he or she is able to resolve the issue without entering into the formal process. A Trustee should not get overly involved in a matter that may come before the Board as a complaint in order to preserve the Trustees unbiased judgment. An overly biased Trustee may need to recuse himself or herself from hearing the Level III grievance."

As simple as it sounds, it is not necessarily easy to truly follow this process. I suspect that many trustees (and other elected officials) around the country struggle with following such a procedure; however, without it, the (trained) staffed members cannot do the job they are trained to do.

### 8. Perform an Annual Self-Audit.

We are fortunate to live in a state that has an excellent board of trustee team self-evaluation instrument, the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Good Governance Inventory. (Download it from <https://goo.gl/JOWyPS>.) Considering the quality of the evaluation instrument, I was shocked to find out that less than 2 percent

of Texas schools actually use this process. (This might explain the aforementioned headlines of “Boards Gone Bad.”)

This inventory is an excellent tool. SCU-CISD’s process for implementation and annual review is outlined in Board Process 1.6 (see step 4). Our trustees are dedicated to this annual review, including the follow-up/goal setting. This process changes very little unless there is an annual meeting (systematic) review of the results and goal setting. In this case, these are goals written BY the board FOR the board. For example, this past year, after completion of the inventory, the SCUCISD Board of Trustees set the following goals for the coming year:

- The Board of Trustees will be more deliberate and systematic in community outreach. (1.11 and 1.12)
- The Board of Trustees will split community outreach into two (2) strands: “Elected Officials” and “Community/ Non-Elected Officials.”
- The Board of Trustees will develop a master list of board-member community outreach involvement opportunities, and trustees will volunteer for attendance at events three months in advance. A discussion item for review from the previous quarter and volunteer attendance for the upcoming quarter will be added to the Board of Trustees Master Calendar in June, September, December, and March.
- The Board of Trustees will work with the superintendent and senior leaders to prepare for the three-year update to the district strategic plan. (EPM 2.1)

There are 24 inventory questions aligning with the following major categories:

A. A vision statement is in place for the district.

- B. A comprehensive statement of goals for the district is in place.
- C. Board action reinforces the central importance of the goals to the work of the district.
- D. The board monitors plan implementation and district success in a formal, scheduled manner.
- E. Goals, standards and/or benchmarks have been established for major aspects of district operations.
- F. The board is familiar with the broad outlines of the systems the superintendent has put in place to manage district operations.
- G. The board and superintendent team regularly assesses board-superintendent operations and monitors district-wide results.
- H. Written operating procedures for the Board and Superintendent are in place.

## 9. Establish a Clear Communication Process.

Every Friday, the Superintendent’s Office prepares a written update for trustees. The update includes timely items relating to instruction, extracurricular, community awareness, and calendar updates.

If a trustee has a question, he or she may email the superintendent and ask for an item to be discussed at future board meeting or to be addressed in a weekly update. Oftentimes, at a monthly meeting, trustees will ask for a follow-up report to be included in the Friday update. This provides an excellent avenue for trustees to get the information they need without necessarily waiting until the next month’s meeting. On the occasion where trustees do pose a question to the superintendent, there is an understanding that the question and response will go to *all* trustees in the following week’s update.

This action truly helps the team of eight to truly function as a team. Nothing increases trust more than communication. Additionally, the superintendent and board president meet weekly to ensure

that trustees and stakeholder concerns and questions are being appropriately addressed and to work on board meeting agendas.

## 10. Hold the superintendent accountable for results.

One of the best ways for a board to avoid micromanagement is to understand the concept of “loose-tight” management. Trustees must be “tight” on *what* they expect and by *when* they expect it, but “loose” on the *“how.”*

It is understood that the superintendent is the expert and the CEO and that he or she knows *how* (the strategies) to get things done. The team of eight must be clear about mission, vision, goals, and priorities, and these *must* be board-approved.

The strategies, however, should be up to the superintendent, and the board should not get overly involved in these processes. The expectation is that the superintendent should deliver results. The tool we in SCU-CISD created to capture results was a scorecard. This way, trustees could see how we were progressing in “real time.” Furthermore, they could ask questions about any particular item on the scorecard. This scorecard truly helps the board stay in the “oversight” of management rather than micromanagement. The district scorecard can be found at <https://goo.gl/8SRWko>.

## Conclusion

These 10 steps are not necessarily easy, but they are essential to begin a systematic approach to good governance. This work, of course, is ongoing. It is a process, not a destination, and will take a commitment of not only the team of eight, but also other senior leaders in the district.

The work really boils down to ensuring trust through systematic approaches and a systematic expectation for excellence. To that end, I will conclude with the following quote from Stephen M.R. Covey’s *The Speed of Trust*:

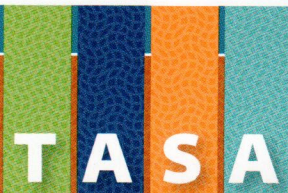
“There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization, nation, economy, and civilization throughout the world — one thing which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love. On the other hand, if developed and leveraged, that one thing

has the potential to create unparalleled success and prosperity in every direction of life. Yet it is the least understood, most neglected and most underestimated possibility of our time. That one thing is trust. Contrary to what most people believe, trust is not some soft, illusive quality that you either have or you don't; rather, trust is a pragmatic, tangible, actionable asset that

you can create much faster than you think possible.”

The CEO and governance team have a moral obligation to each community to ensure that political and personal agendas do not get in the way of effective and efficient operations and do not poison organizational culture. This is not easy work, but it is critical. ■

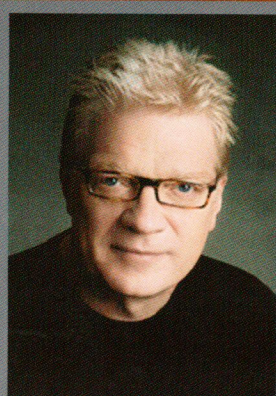
Dr. Greg Gibson is the superintendent of Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City ISD. He has served SCUCISD since 2010.



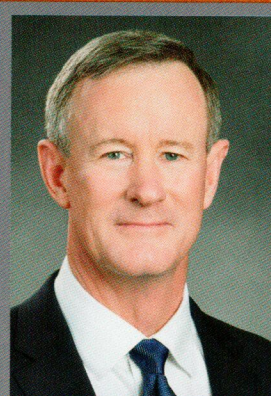
## Join Us at TASA's 2016 Midwinter Conference!

January 24–27, 2016

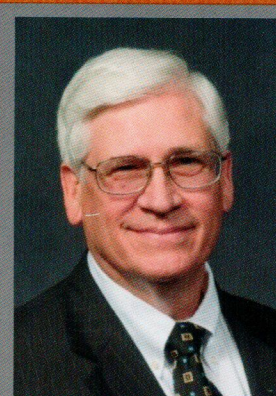
### Keynote Speakers:



Creativity Expert  
Sir Ken Robinson



UT System Chancellor  
Bill McRaven



Former Head of  
LEGO Education  
North America  
Stephan Turnipseed

In addition to 150 concurrent sessions that touch on every aspect of school leadership, including finance, human resource management, digital learning, instructional leadership, facility planning, operations, and assessment and accountability, 2016 TASA Midwinter Conference attendees will hear keynotes by creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson, former head of LEGO Education North America Stephan Turnipseed, and UT System Chancellor Bill McRaven. In addition, the conference offers a full lineup of Thought Leaders. Follow or post about the Midwinter Conference on Twitter using #TASA16!



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