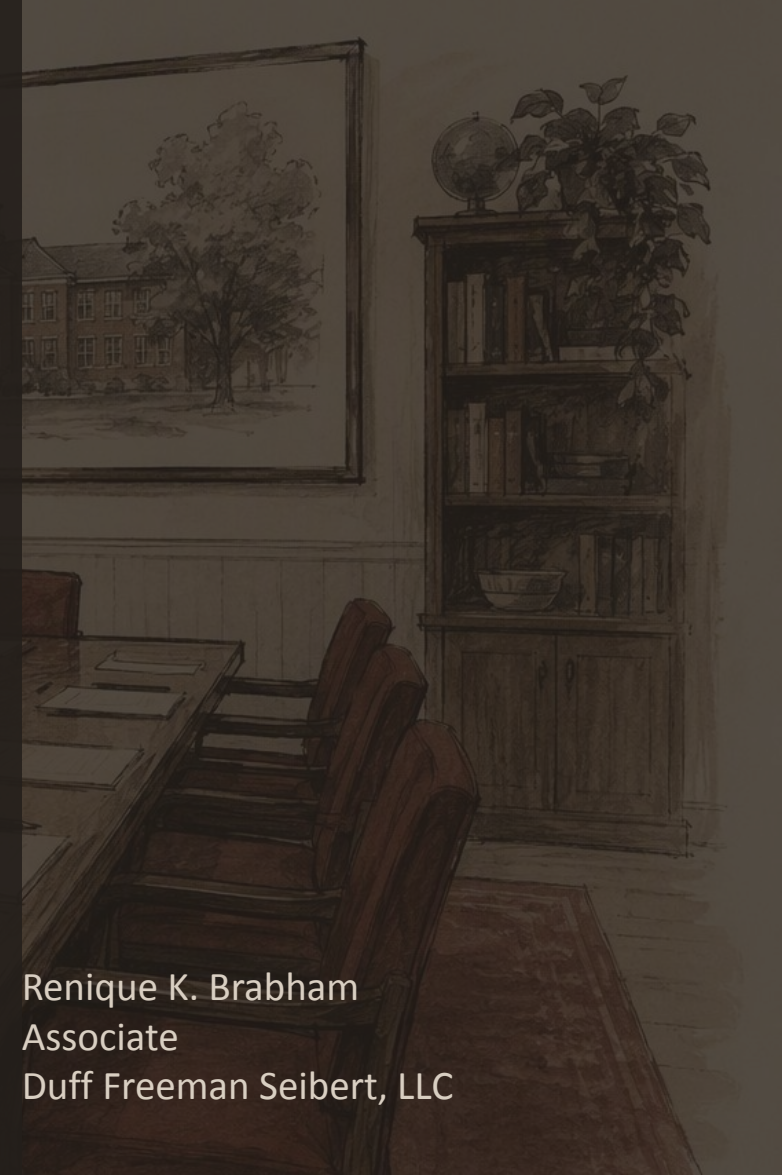
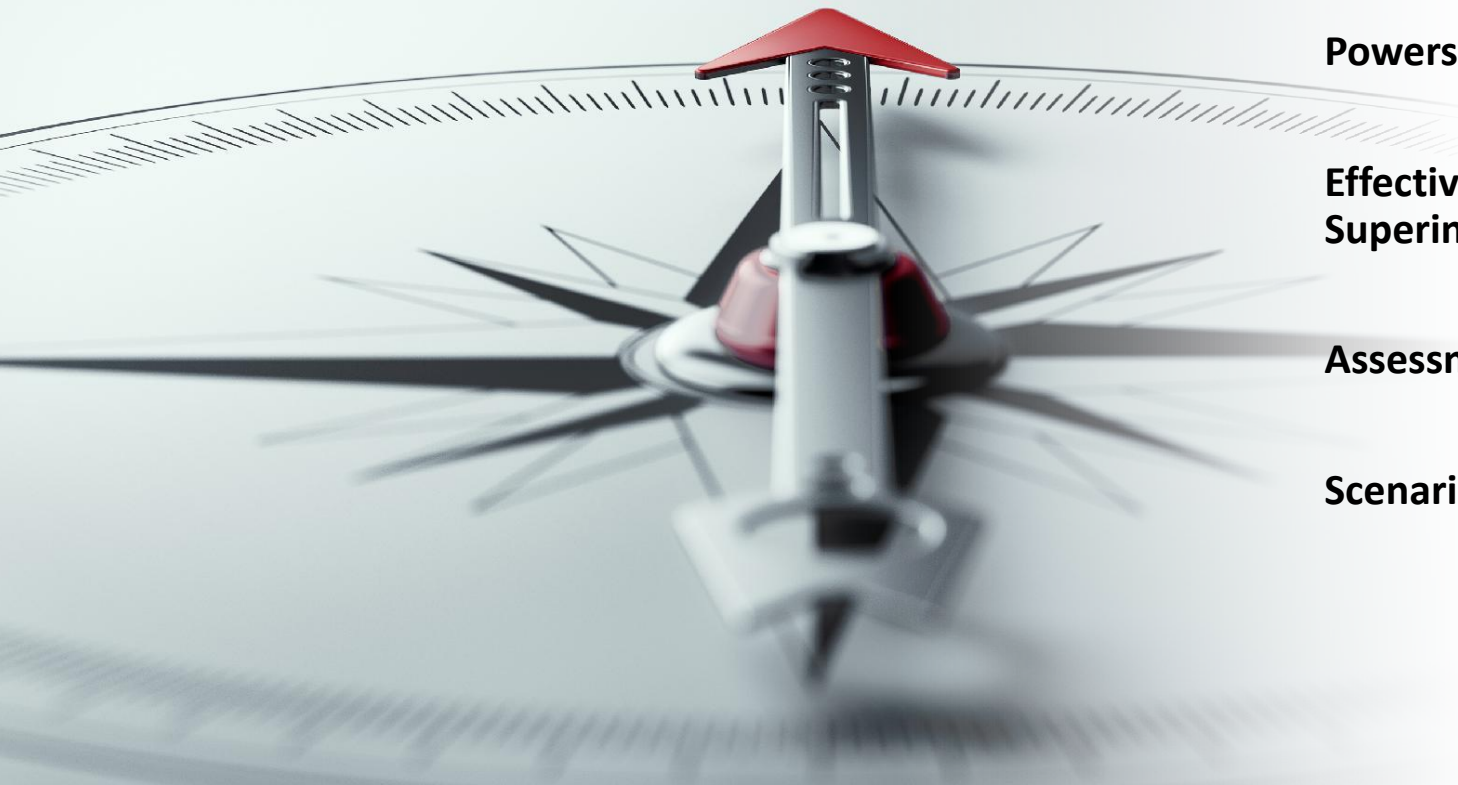


What's a Board to Do?:
*Navigating School Safety,
Administrative Compliance,
and Board Governance*



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Let's Get Oriented



Powers and Limitations

**Effective Relationship with
Superintendent**

Assessment

Scenarios

Power Sources

S.C. Constitution

Art. XVII. Foundational and protected. All else must abide by this.

Statute

S.C. Code § 59-19-10, et al. Enacted law. The board cannot waive it, narrow it, or vote it away.

Administrative regulation

S.C. Department of Education. Binding model policies.

Board policy

What board adopts in open session.

A board decision that conflicts with a higher rung is not a bold decision. It is an exposure.

Power Types



LEGISLATIVE/POLICYMAKING



EXECUTIVE

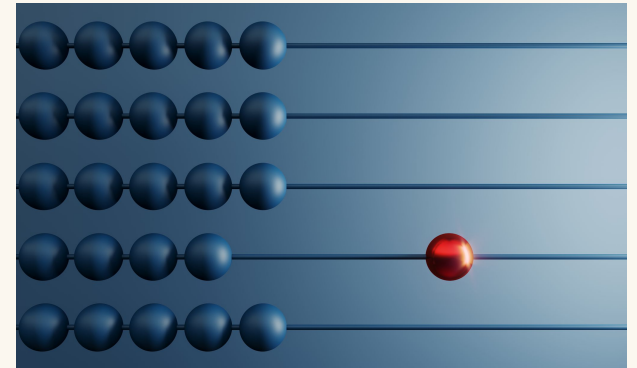
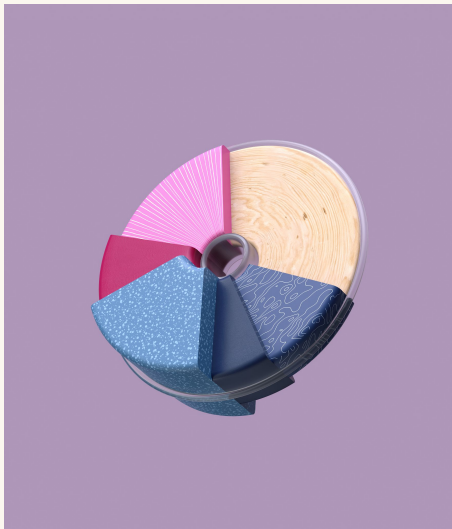


QUASI-JUDICIAL



OPERATIONAL

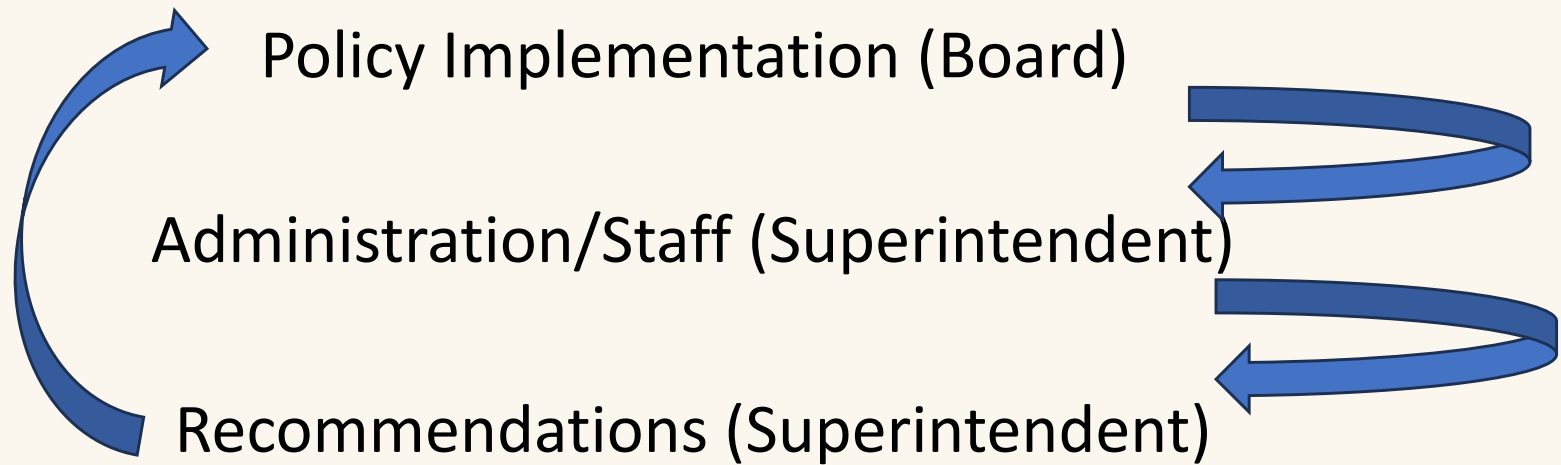
Power Checks





Board-Superintendent Relationship

Board-Superintendent Relationship



THE LINE: POLICY VERSUS PRACTICE

THE BOARD GOVERNS

- Adopts safety policy and the values behind it
- Sets expected outcomes and risk tolerance
- Approves budget and staffing capacity for safety
- Monitors results against the policy it adopted
- Evaluates one employee: the superintendent

THE SUPERINTENDENT MANAGES

- Writes administrative regulations and procedures
- Runs drills, training, and vendor relationships
- Directs the response during an actual incident
- Assigns staff and manages day-to-day operations
- Reports results and exceptions back to the board

Boards adopt the "what" and the "why." Administration owns the "how," the "who," and the "when."

Balance Check

- Do you usually vote for “your” specific geographic area or for the school district as a whole?
- How do you garner support on an issue?
- Are you ever involved in building-level personnel matters?
- Do you ever feel like you have under-delivered after overpromising?
- Are surprises common at your board meetings? How do you typically handle them?
- How comfortable do you feel expressing honest, free flowing thoughts and critiques?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Prepare

Attend, prepare, ask questions, and act as a reasonably prudent person would with comparable information.

Prioritize

Put students and the district ahead of personal, political, or constituent interests. Disclose conflicts.

Comply

Act within statute, regulation, and the board's own adopted policy and practices.

Monitor

Ask for evidence that adopted safety policy is actually working, not assurances that it exists.

Stay Ready!

Governance is rarely tested on a quiet Tuesday.



A CRISIS

A lockdown, a threat, a weather event, a death in the community. Decisions have short turnaround times, and the board—often without full information—must address the community with confidence.

A MANDATE

A new statute or regulation lands mid-year. Someone must decide what the board adopts, what staff implements, and when the district can prove compliance.

Scenarios

Ask three questions:

1. What is the board's move?
2. What is staff's duty?
3. Where does the line get crossed?



SCENARIO ONE: THE 7:42 A.M. LOCKDOWN

A credible threat is reported at the middle school. The superintendent orders a lockdown. Within ten minutes, a board member is at the front entrance asking to be let in, and two others are answering parent calls with their own updates.

The board's move

Stay off the scene. Route every inquiry to the district's designated spokesperson. Preserve the board's ability to review the response afterward.

Staff's move

Execute the incident plan, command the response, and control a single channel of public information.

Where it breaks

A member improvising on social media or arriving on site causes unnecessary and avoidable conflict.

The board's duty during an incident is restraint. Its duty begins again at the debrief.

SCENARIO TWO: A MID-YEAR MANDATE

A state agency issues a rule requiring updated threat-assessment teams, documented training hours, and an annual report. This rule is effective in 90 days. The Superintendent reports it cannot be done without new positions.

1

Ask what the rule actually requires

Distinguish the mandate's floor from staff's preferred implementation. Get it in writing from counsel.

2

Decide what belongs in policy

Adopt or amend only what governs. Leave hours, rosters, and forms to administrative regulation.

3

Cover the gap

If you cannot meet the requirements with current staff, either allocate funding for it or record the deficiency in the minutes.

4

Set the deadline

Direct a compliance report before the deadline, not after it.

"We were not told" is not a defense. Asking, in the minutes, is.

SCENARIO THREE: THE UNREPORTED NEAR MISS

Six months after adopting a visitor-screening policy, a board member learns informally that a side door has been propped open every morning since September. Nothing has happened yet.

- A. Call the principal immediately.**
- B. Wait until next board meeting to bring it up.**
- C. Alert the media.**

SCENARIO THREE: THE UNREPORTED NEAR MISS

Six months after adopting a visitor-screening policy, a board member learns informally that a side door has been propped open every morning since September. Nothing has happened yet.

The wrong move

Call the principal directly, demand the door be fixed, and report back to colleagues at the next meeting.

The right move

Raise it with the superintendent and, in open session, ask the board to request monitoring data on the policy it adopted.

The systemic fix

Adopt a monitoring calendar so the board learns about drift from a report, not from a rumor.

SCENARIO FOUR: THE RIFLE IN THE TRUCK

A student hunts over the weekend and leaves a rifle in the truck. The student parks the truck in the student lot on Monday where the rifle is found and reported, leading to the student being recommended for expulsion. During the expulsion hearing, the student credibly testifies that they forgot the weapon was in the truck. The hearing officer expels the student for possession of a weapon on school property. The family appeals to the board. After the initial hearing, but prior to the appeal, a new amendment was passed requiring that the student knowingly possess the weapon at school.

THE OLD STANDARD

Presence of the weapon on school property was the whole case. Intent was irrelevant.

WHAT THE AMENDMENT CHANGED

The district must now prove a second element: that the student knowingly possessed the weapon at school. Forgetting is no longer legally irrelevant.

The hearing officer applied the standard that existed before the amendment. That is the issue on appeal—not whether the rifle was there.

Deciding the appeal on the record

1 Confirm the standard

Ask counsel, on the record, which version of the statute governs this decision and whether the amendment applies to a pending appeal.

2 Test the findings

The record must contain a finding on knowledge. If the hearing officer never made one, the decision rests on the wrong legal test.

3 Choose the remedy

Reverse, modify the sanction, or remand for findings under the correct standard. Expulsion cannot stand on an element never decided.

4 Fix the policy

Direct that board policy and the administrative regulation be conformed to the amendment BEFORE the next case arrives.

SECTION 59-63-235

EXPULSIONS FOR KNOWINGLY BRINGING FIREARMS TO SCHOOL

- Section 59-63-235. (A) A student who is determined to have knowingly brought a firearm to a school or any setting under the jurisdiction of a local board of trustees must be expelled for no less than one year from the date of the incident. The expulsion hearing must follow the procedures established pursuant to Section 59-63-240.
- (B) If the hearing is conducted by the district board of trustees, the one-year expulsion period is subject to modification by the board on a case-by-case basis.
- (C) If the hearing is conducted by any authority other than the district board of trustees, the one-year expulsion period is subject to modification by the district superintendent of education. The board must receive and review a copy of the results of the expulsion hearing and affirm any modification recommendations by the district superintendent of education. If the board does not affirm a modification recommendation of the district superintendent, the expulsion period established in this section shall be reinstated. A student shall retain all rights afforded to him by Section 59-63-240.
- (D) Students expelled pursuant to this section are not precluded from receiving educational services in an alternative setting to include virtual programming. Each local board of trustees is to establish a policy which requires the student to be referred to the local county office of the Department of Juvenile Justice or its representative.

SCENARIO FIVE: GPA BUMP

A newly elected board member wants to be proactive in making sure all school law requirements are met. He hears through the rumor mill that the principal of one of the district's middle schools wants to continue giving students a break when it comes to grading and authorizes teachers to assign a minimum score that exceeds a student's actual performance on required assignments.

The new board member has learned that such a grading practice violate a new law. Taking the matter into his own hands, the new board member meets with the principal at her school and lets her know that she is violating state law and that the district could lose 10% of state funding as a result.

Is this a good approach by the new board member to addressing the problem?

Section 59-29-250

(A) No public school district or public school may adopt any type of grading system that requires a teacher to assign a minimum grade or score that exceeds the student's actual performance on required assignments. If a school district is found to be in violation of this section, the State Department of Education shall withhold ten percent of the school district's State Aid to Classroom funding.

WHAT ACTUALLY CREATES LIABILITY

Gaps

between adopted policy and daily practice

Silence

in the minutes, where a question asked would have shown the board exercised care

Overreaching

into operations, mudding the delegation of powers

Protective habits

- Document the question, not just the vote: minutes are the board's memory and its defense
- Review insurance, indemnification, and legal advice before you need them
- Confirm that every adopted safety policy has a named owner, a review date, and a reporting measure

OVERSIGHT WITHOUT STRAINING OPERATIONS

Oversight that runs on a calendar costs staff far less than oversight that arrives as a surprise request.

When	What the board asks for
Every meeting	A standing safety item, even when nothing to report
Each quarter	Report detailing completed drills, improvement areas, and other findings.
Twice a year	Review one policy in depth against practice with the key staff person present.
Annually	Full policy audit against current statute and regulation.

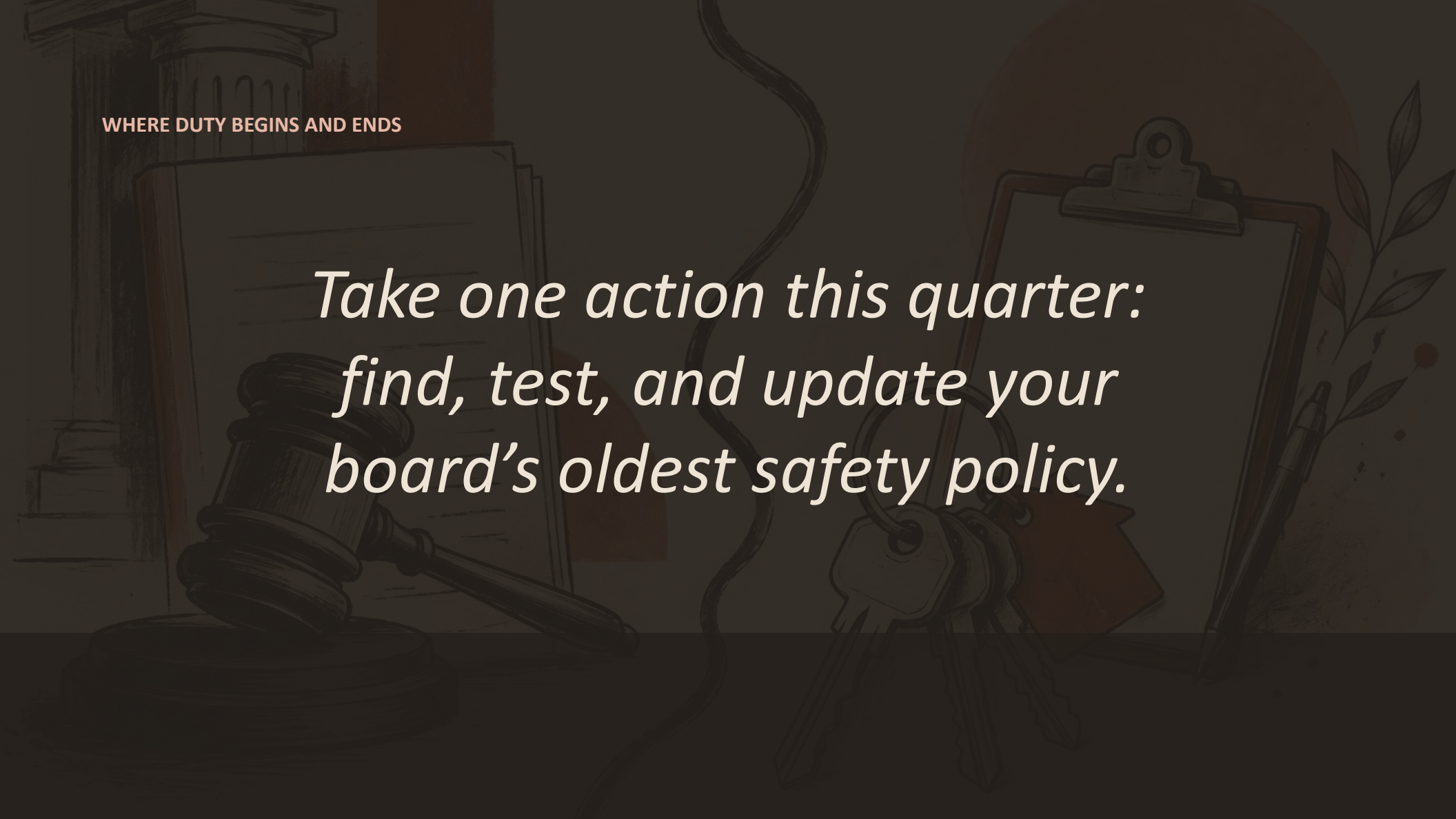
Ask for data the district already produces before you ask it to produce something new.

FOSTERING COLLABORATION

Nobody likes a backseat driver!

- Routinely review functions and goals (before the pressure arrives).
- One voice to staff: the board speaks through the superintendent, not through individual members.
- Requests for information go through the board chair and are shared with all members.
- No surprises in either direction.
- Disagree in the room, support the decision outside.





WHERE DUTY BEGINS AND ENDS

*Take one action this quarter:
find, test, and update your
board's oldest safety policy.*

COMMENTS/QUESTION
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