

Trustees Like Continuing Education at Board Meetings

by Ellen Miller, Kansas Library Trustee Association (KLTA)

Busy library trustees need options. That's why the new Kansas Trustee Education Program (KanTEP) provides many ways to earn continuing education (CE) credit, such as regional system workshops, KLA conferences and online self-study.

Another convenient method is to pursue continuing education as part of the board meeting. To test that assumption, KLTA sponsored a pilot project with libraries across the state.

In a national first, ten libraries tested short training segments as part of their regular agenda. The pilot project's goal was to see how well director-led continuing education at a board meeting worked.

The libraries and directors were:

Abilene, Deb Duckworth

Basehor, Carla Kaiser

Belleville, Leah Krotz

Bonner Springs, Kim Beets

Emporia, Sue Blechl

Garnett, Andrea Sobba

Kingman, GeeGee Helm

Quinter, Sharon DuBois

Syracuse, Joyce Armstrong

Topeka-Shawnee County, Gina Millsap

Directors Liked Scripts and Trustee Handouts

Between March and June, 2007, each director was asked to cover at least one of four topics developed by representatives of KLTA, the State Library and the regional systems. The topics fell under the five KanTEP skill areas – working with the library director; board operations; budgets; advocacy; policies and determining future needs.

A director's script and trustee handout were e-mailed for each of the four topics, along with director and trustee evaluation forms. Each script began with a "real life" scenario.

Evaluation forms were received from 7 of the 10 pilot libraries. Forty-six trustee evaluations were received. Some directors covered more than one topic. The topics and number of times used in board meetings were:

"Effective board meetings" (5)

"Marketing the library to the community" (1)

“Budget issues for trustees” (3)

“Evaluating the director” (0)

Directors gave high marks to features such as “easy to use,” “clearly written,” and “helpful discussion starter.” Comments included:

“It (the topic was Effective Board Meetings) – went pretty well, a good idea for CE. I like being able to choose which topics are appropriate for my board. We got some great ideas from this that we will use.”

“We did a lot of brainstorming on the scenario (budgets); my board came up with some inventive solutions.”

“Trustees give ‘thumbs up’ to this program.”

Unanimously, the 46 trustee evaluation forms received said “yes” to having more CE topics in board meetings. The preferred frequency was every 3-4 months. Selected trustee comments included:

What other CE topics would you like to see presented in your board meetings?

Budgets/finances -- How to read and understand financial records and the budget balance sheet

Computer tech information

Policies and planning for the future

Process of adopting library policies

Ethics policy

Board policy obligations

Annual review of strategic plan

Library law

Marketing your library

Evaluating the director

Library advocacy

Emergency preparedness (2)

Partnering with the community

Orientation of new trustees

What comments or suggestions do you have for “15 minute” CE in board meetings? Verbatim responses included:

“As suggested, have topic sent out prior to meeting so one could take a more thoughtful approach.”

“They are good for generating some discussion among the board members.”

“They seem to be of benefit.”

“It was informative.”

“We need discussion of problems confronted by the staff.”

“Excellent job!”

State Library Trustee Certification Program Began in July

At the 2007 Trustees Friends Day in Topeka, State Librarian Christie Brandau said, “I invite you personally to take a look at KanTEP and then consider becoming some of the first certified Kansas library trustees. If you do, I promise that you will have the satisfaction of knowing you have done the best for your library and your community.”

Participants who complete the voluntary training in all five core skill areas will be issued a Kansas Public Library Trustee Certificate. It is valid for three years and may be renewed after completing five additional CE hours.

The State Library staff will be working to make training materials that cover the five core skills available to libraries where the trustees and director want to pursue trustee training at library board meetings.

Directors and board members who want to pursue topics that are not covered in the training materials may consult with State Library staff members to find the best materials available on the topic.

For more information about the State Library’s certification program, go to <http://www.skyways.org/KSL/development/libdev.html>, then click on “Certification Program for Kansas Public Library Trustees (pdf format).” Or contact Shannon Roy, State Library, at shanroy@kslib.info or 785/296-2148.

For more information about KanTEP, go to www.kslibtrustees.org, then click on “Kansas Trustee Education Program.”