

The decisions behind the project

The School Board's Capital Project Briefing

Before comparing proposed solutions, the district needs a shared account of the problem it is asking teams to solve. A useful board discussion connects the educational need, the project boundary, the operating realities, and the decision requested.

Five subjects leadership should make explicit

Subject	What should be clear
Purpose	The educational or operational need and the evidence supporting it.
Priorities	Essential outcomes, preferences, and tradeoffs that require leadership direction.
Scope and resources	What the project includes, known budget parameters, and significant owner responsibilities.
Operating commitments	The services and activities that must continue and the constraints they create.
Authority and timing	Who can decide, what is delegated, and which approvals or information are still needed.

Ask for a decision, not a vague endorsement

A briefing should identify the exact action requested, the alternatives considered, the supporting information, and the consequences of proceeding or deferring. Make any conditions or unresolved items visible.

Keep responsibilities clear

Leadership establishes direction and acts within its authority. Administrators and facilities staff explain operating needs and implementation responsibilities. Technical advisers help develop requirements and assess proposed responses. Procurement and legal advisers establish the applicable process and approval requirements.

Adapt these roles to the district's actual governance and delegation. This is a discussion aid, not a statement of legal approval requirements.

Questions that improve the briefing

Ask this question	Look for this evidence
What need are we addressing?	A clear description, affected users, and the basis for the need.
What happens if we defer?	Specific operational implications and information about timing dependencies.
Which outcomes are essential?	An agreed priority list with preferences and options distinguished.
What is inside the scope?	An explicit boundary, major interfaces, and owner-provided items.
How will the school keep operating?	A documented account of occupied areas, access, phasing, and temporary arrangements.
What remains uncertain?	An assumption and decision record with responsible people and target dates.
How will proposals be compared?	The established evaluation framework and requested technical evidence.
What are we authorizing today?	The precise action, conditions, delegated responsibilities, and next reporting point.

Illustrative discussion: a summer renovation

A hypothetical project is described as a summer renovation. Yet the proposed approach depends on early room access and temporary storage. The briefing should identify whether the district can provide those conditions, what must change if it cannot, and which decision is needed before teams rely on the assumption.

This keeps the discussion connected to the owner's commitments. The issue is not resolved simply because the presentation repeats a preferred completion date.

A useful follow-up request

Show us the requirement, the assumption supporting the schedule, the person responsible for confirming it, and the decision date.

A one-page decision brief

Use this outline to prepare an agenda discussion or an internal project review. Attach the supporting information and follow the district's required agenda and approval procedures.

Project and meeting date

Decision requested

Need and supporting evidence

Options and material tradeoffs

Scope, resources, and operating commitments

Unresolved items, responsible person, and timing

Proposed conditions and next reporting point

Before distributing: verify that the requested action matches the attached information, open issues have owners, and the people responsible for execution have reviewed the relevant commitments.

Further reading: DBIA's owner-advisor resources and Owner Readiness Assessment, available through dbia.org/best-practices/. Original Savoie Studios discussion aid, issued September 2026.