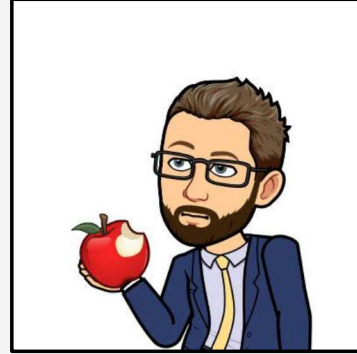


Your Board and You

A Tale of Responsibility and Relationships



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"The real test for any choice is having to make the same choice again knowing full well what it might cost."

~The Oracle, "The Matrix"

What is a School Board Exactly?

- The purpose of a school board is to not only reflect the community or communities they serve, but to actively seek out their opinions and educational interests.
- The school board acts on the needs and wants of those they represent through the creation, amendment, and/or dissolution of policies.
 - How often do boards reflect their community whether based on demographic data and/or priorities or interests?
 - What challenges are posed to the superintendent and board chair when there are discrepancies between the board and those who have (or have not) elected them?
 - How would you define “board involvement” and does that take on a different meaning to a superintendent and a board member?
- If a community wants to improve upon its athletic facilities, and a community member is elected onto the board with an intense interest in athletics over student achievement, does that new board member really have “an agenda?”

And What Are Superintendents For That Matter?

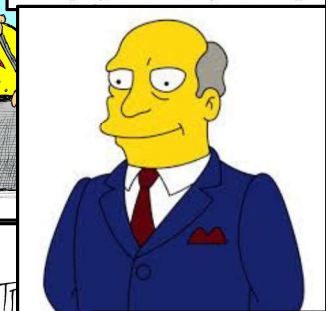
- The board’s selection of the superintendent is, arguably, the most visible and meaningful reflection of the direction they wish to take the district.
 - What happens when there is a board who, while not reflecting the community, selects a new superintendent? How is the superintendent going to know this is the case and what is s/he to do?
- What happens when priorities or interests of the board (i.e. new football uniforms, adding playgrounds, adding Spanish immersion, etc.) conflict with district office identified needs (i.e. social-emotional learning, improving upon the state report cards, special education services, etc.) or changing events or circumstances in the community (i.e. poverty, racial tensions, etc.)?
- What is the “Phantom Zone,” or the zone of acceptance given to a superintendent from the board?
- When does the relationship between the board and the superintendent begin? Better yet, when does it **really** begin?

Intended Outcomes

- The board chair will be able to reflect upon current and previous climates and/or relationships with their school board and the superintendent in order to identify strengths and areas for growth in terms of communication, relationship development, building upon capacity for knowledge and governance, and sustaining a vision.
- The board chair will be able to build upon his or her own capacity in learning alternative points-of-view in superintendent and school board relationships to better proactively anticipate and prepare for changes in current relationship dynamics.

Truth in Jest*

*Or, we all may know there is some truth to all of these cartoons, but to what extent do we allow those truths to dominate the conversation of both what it is and what it could be?



CASE STUDY A
"STATUS"

"I have a competition in me--I don't want anyone else to succeed. I hate most people...there are times when I look at people and I see nothing worth liking."

~Daniel Plainview, "There Will Be Blood"

Relationship Highs and Lows

- “[Effective Board and Superintendent Collaboration](#),” Hanover Research, January 2014
- From a board member’s point of view, how clear is it about who most significantly affects, for better or worse, the superintendent and board relationship? And who is right to take ownership for when the relationship is successful?
 - What responsibility does the board chair have in ensuring the relationship is functioning, collegial, and/or productive and what are some steps that would be considered appropriate?
- What do you feel motivates a superintendent to begin looking elsewhere? And to switch it around, when does a board begin seriously thinking of working with a different superintendent? And when should these things be communicated to the opposite party?
- From a national perspective, are the needs and/or expectations of a board significantly different from district to district or is it primarily the circumstances that differentiate them so?

Relationship Highs and Lows, Cont’d

- The National School Board Association (NSBA) published “[The Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards](#),” and in it they found a key to a successful school district is one where the board “leads as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.”
- In the same publishing, the NSBA cited a lack of accountability in being the largest contributor to a “less successful district.”
 - What does accountability look like for a superintendent and how is that different with a school board?
 - How would you define accountability and is that different among your colleagues?
 - What does accountability look like to you in action?

CASE STUDY B "ESCALATION"

Conversing and Collaborating

- "Is building a consensus collaborating or an attrition of ideas?"
- [The Entry Plan](#)
- There has to be a level of intent from both the board and the superintendent to create and maintain a collaborative and collegial environment that allows for there to be an exchange of ideas and opinions that ultimately leads to a board decision.
- Leading up to that decision is ultimately a balancing act of leadership, financial responsibilities, and strategic planning.
- "What is the difference between communication and the reinforcement of a relationship?"
- From a board chair's point of view, what is reasonable of a board to expect of its superintendent in terms of communication and relationship building? And when is it the board's responsibility?

Conversing and Collaborating, Cont'd

- “[How Can We Get on the Same Page?](#)”
- From a board chair’s point of view, what are some notable shifts you have seen on your board from your first year to now? And how have you seen those shifts play out with both the performance and/or the state of the school district and the superintendent?
- Let us take this opportunity to potentially bust a myth, but are school boards aware of when they change and what would you recommend to a superintendent when a board begins to shift, especially when shifting quickly?
- “[Equity-Centered Capacity Building](#)”

“Twenty years in Gotham, how many good guys are left? How many stayed that way?”

~Bruce Wayne, “Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice”

Um, You May Want to, Um, Look at the Rules...

- [York County School Board Governance and Norms](#)
- “Who enforces the accountability system and what perils are there for board members and superintendents when pushing to enact it?”
- In short, it is a two-way street.
- Should there be considerations made by the respective party, when potentially moving forward on such measures, about the short- and/or long-term consequences?
 - For example, is it appropriate to not pursue in order to preserve a working relationship with an individual board member and/or the board as a whole? Vice-versa for the board with a superintendent.
 - Should the severity of a real or perceived infraction bear any weight towards enforcement? For example, not reimbursing a \$15 lunch compared to advocating for your spouse who works in the district to receive a 20% raise.

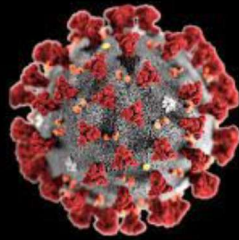
CASE STUDY C
“BUSTED”

Continued Learning and Reflecting on Individual and Collective Needs

- “How should professional growth opportunities be identified, prioritized, and afforded to the school board? And who is a part of that conversation?”
- What are some strategies the superintendent and the board could embark upon to keep the board informed and/or apprised of trends in education?
- How can a superintendent best engage with the board on the conversation about their own professional growth?
- Is it possible to unlearn something?
- What are some reasonable expectations a superintendent should have for the board in their own growth and understanding?

What are some of the resources the NSBA and local school board associations provide to school boards?

To what effect are they assisting board members in their ability to enact policy and work with the superintendent?



Now the really hard work begins.

We are ready to go and nothing can go wrong.

Right?

Think Again!



**A Metaphor for All Superintendent and Board Relationships
(in all ways possible)**



A rectangular chalkboard with a light-colored wooden frame is centered in the image. The words "Thank You" are written in white, serif, all-caps font, stacked vertically. The chalkboard is placed on a rustic, textured surface, possibly stone or concrete. In the top right corner, a green leafy plant is partially visible. In the bottom left corner, a small portion of an orange object is visible. The entire image is framed by a black border.

Thank
You