

EFFECTIVELY EVALUATING THE SUPERINTENDENT'S LEADERSHIP

Leading with Lagging Indicators

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THE FOCAL POINT

- School districts exist for one purpose – **to educate children!**
- School districts have a vision and mission of how it intends to fulfill its purpose.
- The school district, board members, the Superintendent, teachers, and staff are evaluated on whether the educational system is fulfilling its purpose.
- Evaluating the quality of the educational program utilizes indicators and measurements to quantify the effectiveness of the educational program.

EVALUATING THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

- In measuring the quality and effectiveness of the educational program, school boards establish goals and targets.
- These targets and goals are often expressed in finite and quantifiable data (e.g., test scores, graduation rates, college placement rates, etc.).
- Generally, these goals or targets are considered lagging indicators.
- In evaluating the educational program and the Superintendent, school board members must be able to identify and understand the difference between leading and lagging indicators.

WHAT IS A SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION?

- A Superintendent evaluation is a process where the school board reviews the professional performance of the Superintendent over a specific period of time with a focus on items and areas previously agreed upon by the Board and Superintendent.
- The goal of the evaluation is to measure and assess the Superintendent's -the district's Chief Educational Officer- progress towards achieving the identified goals and objectives.
- In accomplishing this task, everyone must understand the role and responsibilities of the Superintendent and Board.

WHAT AN EVALUATION IS NOT...

- A Superintendent evaluation is often used as a tool for an individual board member to voice their “like” or “dislike” of the Superintendent.
 - Temperature reading at a moment in time.
 - Measurement of the personal relationship between the Superintendent and individual board members.
- The use of the Superintendent’s evaluation solely as a barometer fails to capture the interdependent relationship between the Board and Superintendent necessary to provide a quality education to children.



BOARD GOVERNANCE

- A new statute, permits the removal of school boards under certain circumstances. This statute operates as an evaluation of the educational program and governance.
 - Title 59, Chp. 18, Art. 6
 - Effective July 1, 2022
- Boards in underperforming school districts will be monitored for efficient and effective management.
- Why is this important? School boards must govern and manage in a way that shows efficient and effective use of resources and decision-making that is in the best interests of students.
- Thus, it becomes extremely important for school boards to utilize the Superintendent's evaluation as a tool for evaluating the educational program and monitoring the progress towards the educational goals and objectives of the school district.

BEFORE COMMENCING THE EVALUATION

- Make sure the board members are working well together as a Board.
- Board members should engage in analytical dialogue regarding district matters.
- Board members should refrain from discussions that serve only to promote individual agendas and personal differences.
- Remember, board members owe a duty to the children to meaningfully evaluate the Superintendent for the good of all.

BOARD EVALUATION

- Prior to commencing the Superintendent's evaluation, the Board may consider conducting a board evaluation.
- A board evaluation allows board members to review the interaction among board members and the board's ability to make decisions to accomplish its objectives and goals.
- This evaluation may provide board members the opportunity to discuss what are the primary objectives or goals for the school district for the following school year.
 - Objectives and goals should be aligned with the district's strategic plan and made decided with input from the Superintendent.
 - Establish a timeline for the evaluation
- Determine who will analyze the information gathered.

THE BOARD'S ROLE IN EVALUATING THE SUPERINTENDENT

- The Board's role is to use a process of evaluating the Superintendent that:
 - has been agreed upon by the Board and Superintendent;
 - gathers objective information where required.
- After conducting the evaluation, the Board's role is to:
 - have the information analyzed and organized for discussion between all board members;
 - identify success areas and, where necessary, areas of potential growth; and
 - review the findings with the Superintendent.

DEALING WITH THE MOVING PARTS

- While school districts exist for the purpose of educating children, to accomplish that purpose requires school districts to deal with many moving parts.
 - E.g., free and reduced lunch, poverty, race relations, budget concerns, COVID-19, elections, business community, personnel concerns, litigation, etc.
- The moving parts will always be present.
- School Boards must focus on its purpose and give attention to the moving parts to the extent necessary to achieve the purpose.
- Do not let the moving parts replace your purpose.

THE AGREED UPON PROCESS

The agreed upon process is the instrument to be used to gather information.

A review of objective materials to measure against agreed upon goals.

Determine who will analyze the information gathered.

Schedule a special meeting for all Board members to attend and **ONLY** address the evaluation during that meeting.

[See, e.g., *Superintendent Evaluation: The Basics*, PA ASS'N SCH. ADMINISTRATORS, <https://supereval.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/PASA-Eval-Model-1.pdf> (last visited Aug. 26, 2021).]

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- The evaluation instrument should include the objectives and goals agreed upon by the Superintendent and Board.
 - Goals and objectives should have data indicators (i.e., how will the board know that the goal or objective has been met)
- The criteria should contain subjective and objective measurements.
 - Objective criteria=measurable and quantitative (e.g., graduation rates, teacher retention, etc.)
 - Should be specific (e.g., increase test scores vs. increase test scores in this category by _____ percent).
 - Subjective=qualitative (e.g., communication with the Board, responsiveness to inquiries from the community, etc.)

EVALUATION RATINGS

- The evaluation instrument must include ratings that identify the level of performance of the Superintendent.
- The ratings should include a range of performance levels.
- We do not suggest a category for “needs improvement.”
 - Certainly, boards can have such a category, but it tends to cause more of a strain in the relationship in that it is more often used in a destructive rather than constructive manner.

GATHERING OBJECTIVE INFORMATION

- Objective goals established such as academic milestones (e.g., test scores, graduation rates, drop-out rates, participation in certain activities, professional development or course offerings) should be evidenced by a document, tangible artifact, or other retrievable data.
- Utilizing source documents allows the Board to visualize any deficiencies or progress.
- Allowing the Superintendent to submit a self-evaluation may assist the Board in gathering objective data regarding certain criteria (e.g., professional development).

HAVE THE GATHERED
INFORMATION ANALYZED AND
ORGANIZED.

- Preparing and gathering the necessary information is critical for an effective evaluation.
- The information should be structured in a format that is understandable for all board members and that accurately reflects the Superintendent's activities during the evaluation period.
- This can be done by the Board, a consultant, or legal counsel.
- In analyzing the results, board members should have an understanding as to what the data indicators show.

WILL THIS PROCESS BE SUBJECT TO FOIA?

- It will depend on how the process is handled.
- The discussion regarding the Superintendent's evaluation is a personnel/contractual matter whether it is conducted by the Board, a consultant, or legal counsel.
- The analysis is comprised of individual responses given by each board member outside of any duly called meeting.
- Conclusions reached by the Board should be reduced to writing which will become the evaluation, and public document.

IDENTIFYING SUCCESSSES

Often Board members will agree that the Superintendent has demonstrated a high degree of success in many areas measured.

These areas can be captured and identified as an item to be voted upon in the final document that will serve as the evaluation.

Keep in mind that the agreement does not reflect a Board action until voted upon during a Board meeting.

DEALING WITH POTENTIAL GROWTH AREAS

- Areas where growth can occur provide the greatest opportunity for the Board and Superintendent to move the needle for the school district.
- The Board must be able to articulate what the Superintendent can do to grow in a manner that will make a difference for the school district.
 - The Board should reach a consensus as to those areas to be addressed with the Superintendent.
- In identifying potential areas of growth, board members should look at leading and lagging indicators.

LEADING VS. LAGGING INDICATORS

- Lagging indicators measure results and outcomes—the direct result of activities of the district.
- Leading indicators are those factors that influence results and outcomes—those measures that prepare the district to reach its objectives.
 - Conditions or activities that can be changed by action to enhance operational or educational programs which positively impacts the result/outcome.
- The aim is to improve leading indicators over time in order to enhance lagging indicators.

[See, e.g., Jonathan A. Supovitz, *In Search of Leading Indicators in Education*, in EDUCATION POLICY ANALYSIS ARCHIVES, (U.Pa. 2012)].

LEADING VS. LAGGING INDICATORS

- Focusing on leading indicators fosters an inquiry into the district's operations and educational programs that results in rethinking school district resources, supports, and operations.
- Highlighting leading indicators may identify more relevant indicators to evaluate to determine whether the educational program is effectively meeting the objective, achieving the goals, and accomplishing its purpose.

DEALING WITH POTENTIAL GROWTH AREAS

- How you say it will make all the difference.
- This should be a declarative sentence that identifies leading indicators that can be addressed in the immediate future.
 - “Our school district will be even stronger if we...”
- Some leading indicators may require a change in behavior of the Superintendent, but it is not unusual to have the change in behavior to also point toward the Board.

DEALING WITH POTENTIAL GROWTH AREAS

- “Test scores” are a lagging indicator. Test scores are generally the last indicator and follow critical leading indicators.
 - What are some leading indicators that result in increased test scores?
 - What are some things that you can do today to increase the chance of raising test scores in the future?
 - How long do you think it should take for test scores to meaningfully change?
 - What are some things a Board can do today to improve test scores in the future?

DISCUSS WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Take the results of the discussion and invite the Superintendent into executive session for a discussion regarding the evaluation.
- Allow the Superintendent to provide input into the Board's work product regarding actions that can be taken in the immediate future to work towards the identified goals and objectives.
- Remember, an interdependent relationship exists between the Board and Superintendent. Thus, the evaluation should look at ways the Superintendent and Board can work together to achieve the goals and objectives.

WRAPPING UP THE EVALUATION

- The results of the discussion should be included in a letter to the Superintendent.
- The letter should be voted on by the Board.
 - How to handle individual board member comments?
- If the Board chooses, following the discussion with the Superintendent, the Board may vote on a short statement which describes the general view of the evaluation. The statement should be released to the public.

LEADERSHIP EVALUATIONS

REFUEL

RETOOL

REKINDLE

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ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW

THANK YOU!

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