

Recommendation 1.1: Using Student Data in Board Meeting Discussions

The central practice is to return to a small set of student outcome goals throughout the year. The board reviews evidence of progress, asks what the district is learning, and uses that discussion when considering resources and support for schools. This fits South Summit’s school-driven strategic planning approach.

What the research supports:

In a study comparing school board use of student learning data in high-achieving districts and low-achieving districts.

In the higher-achieving districts, board members described receiving information from multiple sources, referring to the needs of specific student groups, and using a process of studying data, questioning, discussing, deciding, and evaluating. Data was scheduled as a standing agenda item, typically monthly.

Example: Assigning a goal or an interim measure to each month to analyze and determine if progress is on track.

In the lower-achieving districts, achievement data were more often received as a general report with little connection to a decision.

School boards must articulate clear student outcome goals, interim measures, regular public monitoring, and board reflection on their work.

Example:

The board establishes a routine for discussing student learning data, with specific questions to facilitate discussion. The board uses a rubric to evaluate their discussions.

A draft South Summit meeting routine

Scheduling Consideration: Schedule a standing student learning item at each regular board meeting. The board could revisit each major outcome at least at beginning, middle, and end of year, while using 90-day implementation updates between those points.

A 20–30 minute facilitated discussion:

- **President names the question:** “Our goal is _____. What are we learning about progress toward it?”

- **The superintendent or designee presents a short report:** target and trajectory; current student results; differences across grades, schools, or student groups; what school teams are seeing; and the next adjustment.
- **Board asks a few common questions:** “Are we on track?” “Which students are benefiting, and whom are we missing?” “What evidence supports your explanation?” “What support or barrier needs board attention?”
- **President closes the loop:** Restate the finding, any board level action or resource question, and when the board will see the measure again. The minutes record the discussion and follow-up.

Performance Target Considerations:

South Summit student learning evidence (data) could pair annual outcomes (state assessments, growth, graduation) with in-year student learning evidence already relevant to school plans:

- Acadience benchmark movement and reading skill progress;
- Common assessment results and student work tied to the identified learning problem;
- Course completion or credits earned; and
- Attendance where it affects the goal.

A brief account of implementation—whether the agreed instructional actions are occurring and what principals are changing after each 90-day review—would give the board context for interpreting the student results.

Possible First Step:

The first step may be to agree on two or three board-level student outcome targets drawn from the school plans, then put their first-year review dates on a public calendar. That would make Recommendation 1.1 visible in agendas and minutes while preserving the schools’ ownership of their instructional plans.