

Board & Administrator

FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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What should you expect of your superintendent?

The following bullet points provide guidance about board and administrator roles and responsibilities from the perspectives of both the board members and the superintendent.

What should the superintendent expect of the board?

- To provide counsel, advice, expertise, and insight into the local community.
- To delegate responsibility for the management of the school district and implementation of board policy to the superintendent.
- To refrain from managing administrative functions, like personnel.
- To understand that the staff is responsible to and reports to the superintendent.
- To communicate openly and honestly with the superintendent.
- To support the superintendent.
- To hold the administrator accountable for the school district's performance.
- To provide an annual evaluation of the superintendent's performance.
- To plan strategically for the school district's future.
- To arrange educational opportunities for the full board.

What should the board expect of its superintendent?

- Full disclosure — prompt, open, and honest communication of the bad news as well as the good.
- To act as the board's professional advisor.
- To implement board policies.
- To serve as the organization's CEO.
- To recommend appropriate policies for board consideration.
- To interpret the needs of the program and present professional recommendations on all problems and issues considered by the board.
- To develop a budget, and to keep the board informed about the school district's financial status.
- To recruit competent personnel and then develop and supervise them.
- To assist the board in developing effective community information programs.
- To provide the board with professional judgment about the school district's strategic needs, and to participate in the board's strategic planning process.
- To provide the board with an annual self-appraisal. ■

Balance what's best for all with your personal interests

Some board members believe they were elected for one reason and one reason only: To serve as the community's fiscal conscience.

Too often, that mindset can lead to this kind of thinking: "We could do more if we didn't have so many teachers and administrators on the payroll."

That is the wrong way for a board member to

approach board service. Remember: The majority of learning takes place between a child and a teacher. The board member is on the board to make the staff's job easier.

Point: Your entire staff must feel they are part of the team if the district is going to be successful in educating every child. ■

Get more out of your superintendent's evaluation form

Many superintendent evaluation documents are set up with assessment statements and a rating scale under broad topics such as "Provides leadership to ensure an effective working relationship with the board," or "Protects XYZ school district's financial and physical resources."

One strategy that adds value to the superintendent's evaluation is providing space for board members' written comments under each evaluation section. This "comments" section gives board members an opportunity to offer specific written feedback.

Boards should also consider adding a final section to the superintendent's evaluation form that allows for board responses to a series of open-ended questions.

A Marshal, Mo., board uses the following four questions to conclude its evaluation form:

1. What impressed you the most about the superintendent's performance this year?
2. What specific recommendations do you have for the superintendent to improve performance?
3. What should be the priorities for the superintendent over the next year?
4. Do you have any additional comments regarding the superintendent that have a bearing on her evaluation?

These questions give board members a chance to offer praise to the administrator, suggestions for improvement, and guidance on setting performance goals for the next evaluation period. ■

Meetings

Use these meeting "norms" to keep your meetings focused and on task:

1. Board of education meetings follow a system of parliamentary procedure.
2. Board meetings stick to the agenda and are businesslike.
3. Board meetings start on time and end on time.
4. Board members arrive on time for meetings.
5. Board meetings last two hours or less.
6. Board members come prepared and participate in discussion at meetings.
7. Board member absences from meetings are minimal.

8. The meeting room is comfortable and conducive to discussion.

9. Committees meet only when there is adequate reason to meet.

10. Discussions are cordial and not dominated by just a few members.

11. Agendas always include positive items, not just problems.

12. Controversial items are dealt with and solutions acceptable to all board members are developed.

13. The board avoids closed session meetings.

14. The board uses its meeting time on matters pertaining to policy, planning, and evaluation, and does not needlessly discuss administrative issues. ■