

Board & Administrator

FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

October 2019 Vol. 33, No. 6

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Developing an entry plan: Part 3

By Dr. Peter Gorman

My entry plan had a lot of moving parts (i.e., meetings, events, and activities), but I was able to maintain my focus because the entry plan had five goals that were clearly articulated and understood by the Board of Education and by me. Those goals were:

1. Develop and ensure successful district reform governance through effective and positive board-superintendent relations.
2. Increase student achievement for all students while simultaneously closing the achievement gap.
3. Improve public trust, commitment, and confidence through open, honest communication, responsive corrective action to identified obstacles to improving student achievement, and the conditions of teaching and learning.
4. Increase organizational effectiveness and efficiency.
5. Establish a supportive, positive, and effective district climate and culture singularly focused on the improvement of student achievement using a continuous improvement model.

Getting to this point — garnering board approval for a preliminary course of action, which is of course what the goals were — was a crash course for me in board relations.

The wind was in my favor, as much as it could be given with the contentious nature of the Board of Education and their negative image in the court of public opinion. Mitigating these factors was that the Board of Education was in the middle of comprehensive training and had adopted policies supporting reform and improvement. What it boiled down to for the district was that the superinten-

dent and the senior leadership team had to create a climate and culture and put in place systems, processes, and structures to create an aligned system to increase student achievement at scale for all students, closing achievement gaps, and increase the graduation rate. In this organization, the superintendent is the person with the car keys and the principal is the person actually driving the car. All other players — administrators, teachers, and school support staff — are passengers.

All of this was in my mind when I created five goals for my first three months as superintendent. I had to win over the board, the public, and the employees simultaneously while laying out and selling all three audiences on my personal theory of action for increasing student achievement at scale.

In any top leadership job, the treadmill is already up and running when you step on it — and my entry was no exception. But the five goals provided structure and focus for me and for the Board of Education.

The goals served another purpose, too. They became a significant part of my evaluation. All of this was by design. The key point here is that from the beginning, we focused on an aligned system to increase student achievement at scale. An effective entry plan is an integral component of such a system. We aligned our actions with identified goals. We aligned those goals with my evaluation, as well as the evaluations I did for executive staff each year. And we aligned them with what we thought was best for students. The early goals, the long-term goals, the district's success, and my evaluation were inextricably linked, and during my entire time in Charlotte this alignment drove our work. ■

Never attack the media; avoid grandstanding

Reporters love it when a board member is very angry and confronts them about press coverage. Great quotes make for great stories.

This is why it's vital to speak with one unified voice. Nothing destroys public confidence quicker

than board members publicly quibbling during meetings.

It's another reason why you don't want individual board members going off with a reporter to give their own media interviews on a contentious issue. ■

Evaluate progress toward goals

Evaluate the progress you make toward your goals at least once a year. Did you reach them? Did you learn something that will help you plan for next year? It's easy to make the same mistakes twice if you don't carefully analyze where you encountered problems.

But always remember, the board evaluates the administrator, and the administrator evaluates the em-

ployees. The board's evaluation of staff performance infringes on the superintendent's responsibilities.

What about your district's future? There are plenty of places your district can go and too little time and money to accomplish everything.

Recommendation: Sit down as a board and superintendent team. Decide where you want the district to go and make your plans. ■

Role and responsibilities chart gives guidance

It's important for boards and their superintendents to clarify who is responsible for what. This is an effective way to avoid problems, like board micromanagement of the administrator that

can create tension in the board-superintendent relationship. Use the following chart to designate specific board and superintendent responsibilities:

Key: **B** = board responsibility; **S** = superintendent responsibility.

1. Establish and communicate the mission, values, and strategic goals for the school system. **B**
2. Develop and approve policies to guide the district. **B**
3. Implement board policies and directives. **S**
4. Advise the board on all matters under board jurisdiction. **S**
5. Recommend policies, strategic plan initiatives, and educational programs for board consideration. **S**
6. Implement the strategic plan. **S**
7. Approve the annual budget. **B**
8. Establish a monitoring and evaluation system, as well as support and recognition systems. **B**
9. Oversee financial planning and control. **S**
10. Establish organizational roles for staff. **S**
11. Evaluate the effectiveness of the board in achieving established goals. **B**
12. Supervise and evaluate district operations, and report to the board on district performance. **S**
13. Appoint/select school site and central office administrators. **S**
14. Report annually to the public on school performance. **B**
15. Act as an advocate for public education. **B/S**
16. Report to the board on student learning, achievement, and development. **S**
17. Maintain professional relationships with staff, administrators, the parent community and other community individuals, groups, and organizations. **S**
18. Hire, supervise, evaluate, and, if necessary, terminate the superintendent. **B**
19. Know and follow its own policies. **B**
20. Share information openly. **B/S** ■