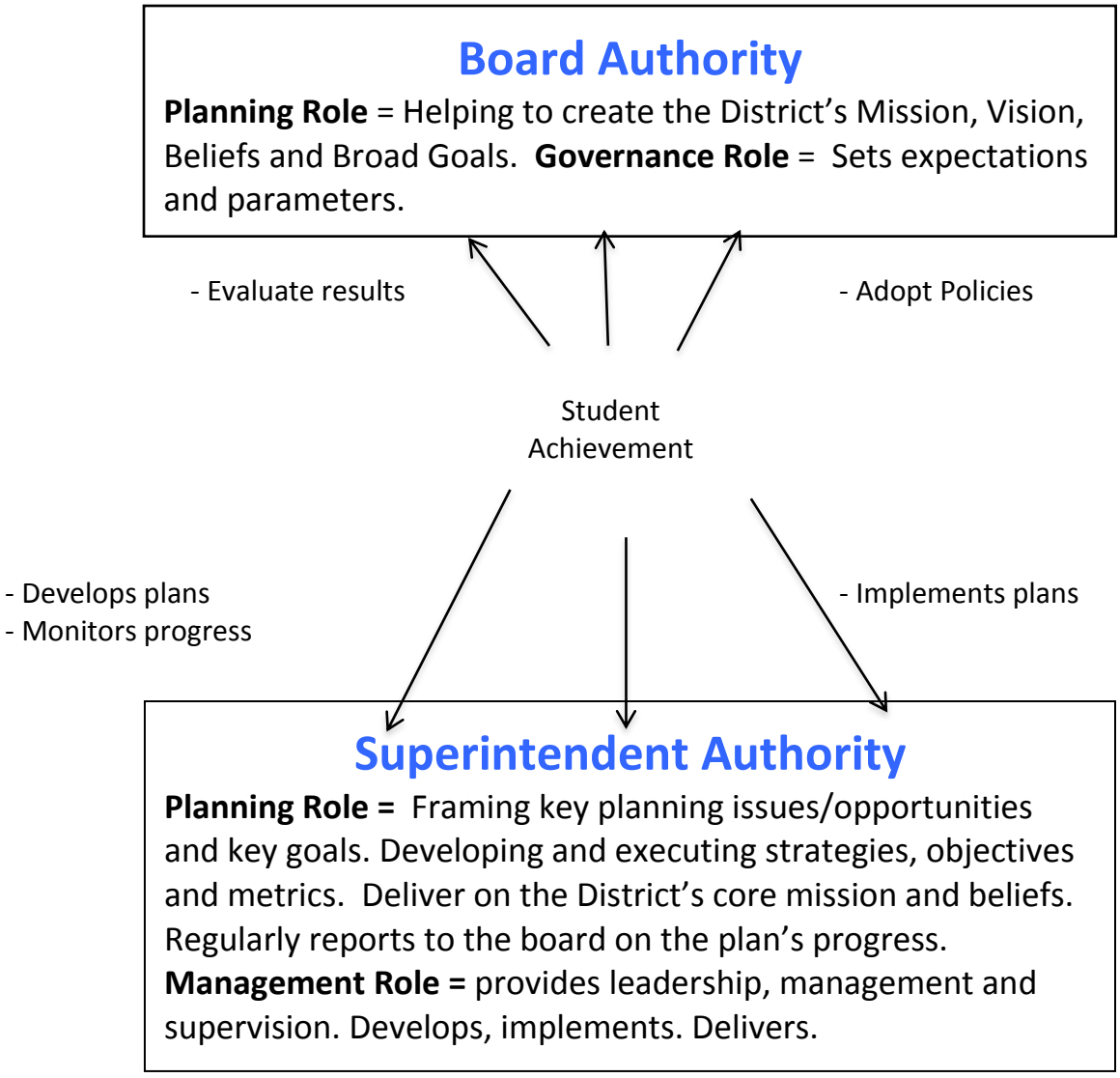
Review of the MN School Board MN Association Model



Review of Group/Board Development Stages

Form – Stage of coming together - clarity on purpose, roles and responsibilities. Boundaries and scope.

Storm – Natural, healthy stage and ongoing ability of a group to represent and address different perspectives and opinions. Learning how to constructively address conflicts.

Norm – Establishing and agreeing upon a set of processes and/or procedures that will serve to guide a group a group's decision-making, communications and operations.

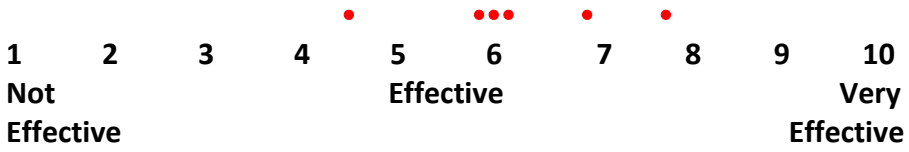
Perform – A group's ability to achieve its goals and fully executive its mission, role.

Note: at the 2/2015 board session, members indicated they were between the norm and storm phases of group development.

Review and Refinement of Mahtomedi School Board and Superintendent Leadership Team Operating Practices

Using a 10-point likert scale, school board members evaluated their performance against their four operating practices. Suggested improvements/new strategies were generated for each of the operating practices.

I) How we <u>relate to one another</u> (unity, conflict and decision-making)



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/// ○ Board members will relate to one another with honesty, integrity, and respect. Once a clear majority of the Board has agreed to a certain position and discussed it thoroughly, other Board members will not renew discussion of that topic provided that a full discussion and vote has taken place.

○ Both Board unity and honest disagreement are legitimate and have their appropriate place (individual responsibility, member responsibility, chair responsibility).

// ○ When a majority of the Board makes a decision, the minority members will respect majority rule and exemplify the standard. "I did not agree with this action, but I will respect and support the position of the Board".

○ Board members and Superintendent will not criticize or second-guess each other behind the scenes.

/// ○ Board members agree to devote time on an annual basis to review these norms/guiding principles.

<u>Operating Practice #1:</u>
Comments/Suggestions and New Strategies for Continuous Improvement

1) Need a process for tracking key discussion points. Ask the clerk to do this? It's difficult sometimes to review the decision without a context, i.e., the key discussion points/elements. Currently, meeting notes just state decision.

2) How to document and record key discussion points (provide a "Memory Tool")? "How to" ideas:
   a. After motion and vote….
   b. Ask for Discussion points – if want or needed
   c. Write up brief bullet points
      - No names attached

- Visually view them/edit as a group

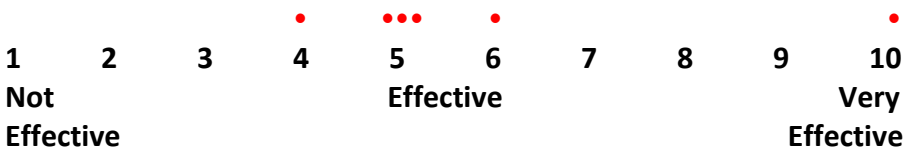
d. Mark facilitates the capturing of the key discussion points
e. Discussion summaries are included/integrated in the formal meeting notes
f. Benefits of the discussion summarizes:
   - Keep/retain summary of discussion (memory tool)
   - Transparent to public
   - Demonstrates thoughtfulness

ACTION/AGREEMENT:

1) Mark/Superintendent agrees to capture key discussion points when board requests. Discussion points are brief, bulleted, and when possible, visually listed during the meeting on a flipchart, etc.
2) Key discussion points will be included/integrated into the formal school board minutes.
3) Use summary discussion process and documentation in Committee Meetings and Board meetings. Next steps/Actions will also be documented.

3) After a board decision has been made, how and when can a board member request that the issue be re-opened?
   - Go to Chair with "new" information (not discussed, data not previously available).
   - Chair confers with Superintendent.
   - Also see aspects of this issue covered under Operating Practice #4.

II) How we <u>communicate</u> (boundaries, transparency, being informed)



- The Superintendent will respect the need for all Board members to have the same information that relates to issues coming before the Board.
- The Superintendent will provide written updates on a regular basis on issues of interest and concern affecting the school district. (Requester of information will cc the Board Chair)
- Board members will channel request for information, reports, etc. through the Superintendent rather than directly to staff. (Requester will cc the Board Chair)
- All official communication between Board members and other school district staff will be channeled through the Superintendent, particularly if it relates to performance of school district employees (Exception – thank you notes from Board members to staff).

Suggestions for Continuous Improvement:

- What's the right amount information that is needed/required to share?
- Consensus vs. votes?
- CCs needed to the Chair on some communications to the Superintendent

/ **Operating Practice #2:**
Comments/Suggestions and New Strategies for Continuous Improvement

1) Process for Superintendent regarding sharing of information with individual board member(s) in-between formal meetings of the school board:

// **AGREEMENT/ACTION:**

a. Superintendent will put information informally shared with individual board member(s) in next week's board notes, if not time sensitive.
Not all information need be shared, but if it relates to District policies or a controversial matter it should be shared.

b. If timely, then Superintendent will email information to everyone rather

c. Shared responsibility of board members and Superintendent – when and how to share informal information with the full board – honoring of transparency

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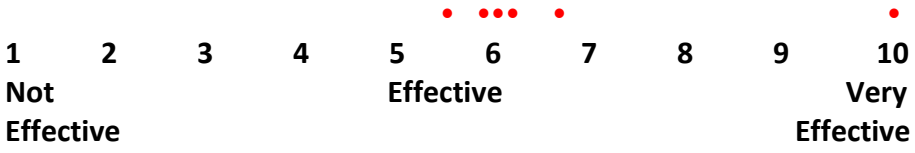
III) How do we govern (roles, responsibilities, and expectations)



- It is agreed that the Board Chair and Superintendent will meet prior to each meeting so that he or she is fully prepared to run the meeting.
- Legal questions should be forwarded to the Superintendent who will contact an attorney for assistance.
- Board members will contact the Superintendent when they receive parental complaints rather than contacting the staff directly.
- All routine personnel recommendations will be approved unless the Superintendent is contacted in advance.
- Board members receiving complaints will encourage parents to follow channels (teacher, principal, superintendent, etc.) and avoid communicating the "I'll fix it" message.

- Board members will appropriately clarify their role; i.e. citizen, parent, or school board member in their interactions with teachers and other staff.

// Board members will set the general parameters for subcommittee and task force committee assignments. *

- Board members will notify building principals when visiting a building in their official capacity as a member of the Board.
- Board members will attempt to visit each building at least once per year.
- Board members who are not in attendance at assigned school board committee meetings are responsible for getting information discussed prior to any full school board meeting where the same issue may be discussed.

// Board members will focus on policy and board parameters and not on administrative/management activities.

/ Board members will recognize and respect that their authority exists where a quorum of the Board meets and not as individuals.

Operating Practice #3:
Comments/Suggestions and New Strategies for Continuous Improvement

1) Discussions held at study session and committee meetings vs. regular meeting. Sharing of information? Issues of balance of delegation and desire for information. To help with this:
   - Remember, committee assignments = assumes trust in delegation
   - Committee is to present recommendations to the full Board for review – questions/etc. and approvals. Opportunity is there for information sharing and exchange.
   - In a summary discussion points in committee meeting notes, as discussed doing for school board meeting notes. This will help with information sharing and understanding recommendations, etc.
   - Bring larger more complex committee issues to a study session. Committee decides when information is ready to go to the full board and/or a study session.
2) Individual Board members who serve as representatives to groups outside the school Board structure should report back to the full school Board at next regular meeting. If relevant, could report at a study session instead of board meeting.

IV) How we conduct meetings (meeting protocol/process and participation)

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not Effective				Effective					Very Effective

Relates to Practice #1

Robert's Rules Define this

4th bullet: Questions to board via Board Chair & Superintendent

- It is the Board Chair's responsibility to remind member, when necessary, to limit discussions to the agenda.
- Board members may bring to the Board items they think are important policy issues. They begin this process by bringing the item to the attention of the Superintendent or the Board Chair who will then schedule the time for a future Board meeting. The Board Chair will be the "gatekeeper' for these issues. At the beginning of a meeting, the Board Chair will discuss what requests have been made and any decision about whether or not to add the item. If the Board Chair determines that an item will not be added to the agenda, the Board member who made that request can ask the Board for approval to add the item. If there is a "second" to the motion and a majority vote for the item, it will be added.
- Board members agree to prepare for discussions in advance and review the materials distributed in the packet before the meeting.
- Board members who disagree with recommendations in the addendum or need more information before making a decision will contact the Superintendent or School Board Chair prior to the meeting.
- The Board Chair will welcome visitors and make it clear at the beginning of the meeting how they can participate. Citizens in the audience can be recognized and comment from the podium at the beginning of the meeting during the "Public Comment" time period.
- Board members needing additional information about consent list recommendations or wishing to move items from the consent list will contact the Superintendent or Board Chair before the meeting.
- An agenda and background material for each Board meeting will be provided the Monday before each meeting. Additional items may be added at a later date, as needed.
- "No surprises" is an important management standard in regard to public board meetings and is a shared responsibility of the superintendent and individual Board members.

Operating Practice #4:
Comments/Suggestions and New Strategies for Continuous Improvement

1) "Do Ask, Do Tell" – when it comes to questions regarding Roberts Rules or other board meeting processes. Provide friendly reminders to other board members when you think they may be out of order/process not being followed.

2) Remind or educate audience on their role at board meetings.
Provide a set *preamble* at start of meetings as a friendly reminder to the public about their role and participation at school board meetings.
AGREEMENT/ACTION: Mark agreed to prepare/redraft a public meeting participation document (level #3 – MSBA)

3) Agree to call committee members or public out of order – hold to the agenda (#3 level)

4) Call out agenda items and how to get information if question/issue does not pertain to the meeting agenda. Chair does this.

5) Work for balanced participation with public and school board. Chair does this with board member support.

6) School board members should not feel obligated to ask questions when it may impede effective/efficient meeting processes.

7) Suggest that District staff state the goal of District presentations at the beginning of their presentation, i.e., FYI, only asking for guidance, requesting feedback, etc. Overtly tie back to Board decision-making roles and responsibilities and/or bigger picture.

8) Study sessions: consider use of hand of 5 for check-in/straw polling for how members rest on a particular issue.