

# Board & Administrator

FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

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## Board should make time for a self-appraisal

According to results from *Board & Administrator's 2014 Survey on School Boards*, a survey of the readership conducted late last year, 48 percent of school boards never evaluate their own performance. Only 43 percent of school boards evaluate their work annually.

These are discouraging numbers that suggest boards are neglecting a prime opportunity to improve their governance of the district. A board that looks critically at its strengths and weaknesses is better positioned to lead the district into the future. That's the purpose of a board self-evaluation.

One reason many boards choose not to evaluate themselves is the, "Who has time?" factor. A self-appraisal process doesn't have to be long and involved.

The board self-evaluation form on page 2 is a good way to get started. It's designed to be a quick board self-appraisal. Just ask the board president or superintendent to compile the results, note any areas where the board agrees improvement is necessary, and be prepared to offer input into how to strengthen the board's performance in these areas of agreement. ■

### Board performance evaluation

Frequency of board performance evaluation	
Annually	43%
Every 2-3 years	9%
Never	48%

### 4 rules for board communication

To ensure effective board and superintendent communication (and a healthy relationship with your administrator), the board should commit to these four rules.

1. The board president and superintendent will communicate each week.
2. Board members should communicate with the public through hearings, regular board meetings, and vehicles such as publications and the district's website.
3. Individual board members will respect the limits of their authority and apply this to their interactions with district stakeholders. For example, an individual board member will never attend a community meeting as an official representative of the board without the full board's authorization.
4. The board should agree to resolve all disputes with the superintendent in a professional and legal manner. ■



## Analyze board priorities, time devoted to them

The board’s priorities should march in lock step with the school district’s. If these priorities are not aligned, the board should ask why they are out of line. Look to the district’s strategic goals or plan to determine whether board and district priorities are currently aligned.

Perform the following analysis to determine if the board and district are in synch on priorities. Ask yourself, “If not, why?”

1. List the district’s top three priorities (these could be from a list of board-developed goals or the district’s strategic plan).

2. Do we allocate more meeting time to the board’s priorities than we do to less important items?

3. How much time, on average, do we spend on the board priorities listed above at our board and committee meetings?

4. In recalling recent board meetings, which agenda items could have been handled more quickly at the meeting or delegated to the superintendent?

5. What actions should our board take to spend more time on our priority matters? ■

### Student achievement should drive policy

Hanover Research’s report, *Effective Board and Superintendent Collaboration*, recommends that a board use student achievement as the driver for its policy decisions.

Problems occur when politics affect the board’s work. “When school boards fail to act as a single voice and specific members become mavericks or ‘lone rangers’ who appeal to special interest factions rather than the public at large,

student achievement suffers,” according to the report.

Misplaced board priorities can force the superintendent to water down policy recommendations to gain acceptance by a polarized board, according to the report.

For more information, visit [www.hanoverresearch.com/insights/effective-board-and-superintendent-collaboration/?i=k-12-education](http://www.hanoverresearch.com/insights/effective-board-and-superintendent-collaboration/?i=k-12-education). ■

### Board self-evaluation form

Please include any comments in the space provided. Use the following rating scale.

4 strongly agree

3 agree

2 disagree

1 strongly disagree

1. The board works together as a team.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
2. Board members communicate effectively with each other.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
3. The board communicates effectively with the public.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
4. The decision-making process is effective.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
5. The board is maintaining its legal role, i.e., a policy-making body.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
6. As individuals, board members understand their role and act accordingly.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
7. Board members conduct themselves in a manner conducive to board productivity (i.e., attendance, preparation, participation).	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
8. Board members treat each other with respect and dignity.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
9. The board agenda is structured for action-oriented meetings.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				
10. Agenda background materials are complete and received in a timely manner.	4	3	2	1
Comments: _____				