

Determining Potential Projects for Policy Advisor Fellow

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Objective of Presentation

- * If the board chooses to accept the support of a Policy Advisor Fellow, we will need to determine the projects to be completed by this person by October 12th. One project to consider is the completion of an assessment of the board's performance.

Why should we consider an assessment of board performance (Part 1)

- * It would be a good developmental process for our board.
- * We have expressed an interest in benchmarking ourselves against a national standard in the past.
- * It lines up with IASB guidance and best practice regarding school boards: (From the IASB packet provided at our Saturday Strategic Planning Meeting):
 - * *IASB's Foundational Principles for Effective Governance:*
 - * Principle 1: The Board Clarifies the District Purpose: “Effective ends development requires attention to at least two key concerns: student learning and organizational effectiveness.”
 - * Principle 5: The Board Monitors Performance: “The Board constantly monitors progress toward district ends and compliance with written Board policies using data as the basis for assessment.”

Why should we consider an assessment of board performance (Part 2)

- * *“Picture of an effective school Board”*:
 - * #1: Focus on ends: The bulk of most Board meetings will involve the challenge of clarifying goals, directions, and purpose. If the school Board is not talking mostly about students, the board has defaulted on its core responsibility.
 - * #2: Monitoring and assessment: Monitoring will be more precise; no wandering around in data without pre-defined Board-stated criteria. Data is used to learn, not blame:
 - * #11: Self-evaluation: Since the Board has decided exactly how it intends to do business, it takes regular opportunities (sometimes at each meeting) to compare behavior to Board process policies.
- * *“8 characteristics of an effective Board”*:
 - * #3: Effective school Boards are accountability-driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.
 - * #5: Effective boards are data savvy; they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement.

Why should we consider an assessment of board performance (Part 3)

- * We have expressed interest in this type of continuous improvement activity in the recent past. There would be value in this being done by someone outside of the board.
- * When we know how we are doing, we are less likely to be surprised or blind-sighted by important issues.
- * It would also show our community that we are working hard in our roles and are national leaders.
- * It would show our administrators and staff that we have high expectations for ourselves first.
- * It would be helpful to assess our board's performance so that we can understand where we are before we start our district's long-term planning process.

Possible assessment of board performance:

- * A school board evaluation tool being developed by [Bellwether Education Partners](#) for [Colorado Succeeds](#) – a group that works to improve public education in CO. It is too late for our board to be part of the official pilot of the tool.
- * However, the PAF could complete the review with some light support from Bellwether.
- * Bellwether's role would provide a couple hours of support (free of charge) to:
 - * Provide the board and PAF with a draft rubric
 - * Kick off the process with them via conference call where we've provided some instruction and suggestions on how the rubric works and how to proceed.
 - * Be available for questions along the way, check-in and a final debrief. All told, in that process, Bellwether support has amounted to a couple of hours of our time.
- * We would be expected to share the results of the board assessment with Bellwether and Colorado Succeeds so that they could further refine their product. They would not release the results we share with them.
- * There would be no cost to the district for this project, outside of minimal staff time to gather information and participate in interviews.

Would assess up to 36 items and report them back to the board. Items include (Part 1):

- * **Student Outcomes:**

- * On measures of student performance used for state accountability purposes, students (all students and student subgroups) outperform state averages.
- * Gaps in achievement among student groups defined by race and income are narrower than state averages and or show improvement over the most recent three years.

- * **Strategic Planning and Goals:**

- * District performance relative to goals is measured, tracked and discussed at board meetings at least 3 times throughout the year.
- * Goals are measurable with qualitative and quantitative data.

- * **Allocation of Board Time and Resources**

- * In making policy decisions, the board engages with data on a range of student achievement-related outcomes where applicable (in lieu of relying on anecdote).

- * **Proactive Public Engagement**

- * Board solicits community (parents, community leaders, etc.) participation in the development of strategic plans and district goals.

Would assess up to 36 items and report them back to the board. Items include (Part 2):

- * **Financial Condition of the District:**

- * District maintains at least an “A” bond rating from an independent third-party rating agency.

- * **Appropriate Financial Oversight:**

- * Approved school board budgets reference and are aligned with stated district performance goals.
- * Board deliberations on the budget include consideration of equitable allocation of resources among schools and students. *(For example, financial reporting, budget documents, or public communication of budget processes/decisions include breakdowns of budgets at the school and student levels.)*

- * **Strong Superintendent Relationship:**

- * Board meetings reflect alignment among established district goals, recommendations made by the superintendent, and decisions reached by the board the majority of the time.

- * **Engagement of District Community:**

- * Board policy, superintendent evaluation policy, or other board documents indicate efforts to engage the broader district employee community on the mission, strategy, and goals of the district.

Additional Details

- * **What would be the form of the results reported to the board?** We would be able to determine:
 - * An assessment on all measures or a select number,
 - * Whether we wanted a qualitative description of our performance on each measure,
 - * A quantitative score tied to a rubric for each measure, and/or something else.
- * **Would the results be confidential?** No. The results would be provided to the board.
- * **How flexible is the timing on this work? Could the data work be done later in the year? We have a new superintendent and this data work would likely be difficult to get done until Sept to Oct. Would that be OK?** The timing is flexible.
- * **What are the components of the work?** Analysis of information available to the public and interviews.
- * **What would be the purpose of interview component, how would it be done and how would interviews be used?** The purpose of getting that kind of feedback is to pressure test to the tool to see if its results are aligning with the perceptions of people who are "on the ground" and familiar with the board's functionality. It's really just a gut-check for the researcher. To the extent that a respondent is extremely biased in any direction, that feedback is going to be less useful in terms of judging the tool. But, if there is a great deal of polarization in the impressions people who are truly knowledgeable about the board have regarding its effectiveness, that's important to know as well. The researcher may opt to solicit that feedback through a web-based survey instead, which would enable her/him to include more respondents. So the researcher would be open to your thoughts on achieving a balance of perspectives. The interviews are not tied to the grades...they are to provide a qualitative comparison to "reality check" the output of the tool...essentially to help us understand if the tool works.
- * **Could we undergo the assessment later in the year or in 12 months to look at growth?** Yes! If the board wanted to use the tool again once its finished, or be part of later roll-outs, it could.

Discussion