

Lowell Joint School District

Tradition of Excellence Since 1906

The Home of Scholars and Champions



ONE BOARD ONE VOICE





Nearest thing
to a
marriage...



Board Superintendent Relationships



Partnership

Schools operate best when there is a strong partnership between the board and the superintendent.



Relationship

Such a relationship does not develop by chance. It must be cultivated by both the superintendent and the board members.

Essential Question:

During these unprecedented times, how might superintendents serve their communities by using their leadership to support board members while focusing on what is best for the students, families, community, and employees we serve?

Today's outcomes examine:

- Continuing to build our superintendents community (deputy superintendents, assistant superintendents, & directors)
- Share strong board-superintendent relationships based on seven elements
- How to build the governance TEAM

Board-Superintendent Relationships

Schools operate best when there is a strong partnership between the board and the superintendent. Such a relationship does not develop by chance. It must be carefully cultivated by both the superintendent and the board members.



A Strong
Board-Superintendent
Relationship Is Based
On Seven Elements



AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY: THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT

- Only the governing board can adopt policy
- The superintendent and staff are accountable for the implementation of all board policies
- Failure to follow and overlapping of these responsibilities = ineffective management and waste.
- Confusion and misunderstanding between board members, superintendent, staff, and community most often result from a lack of understanding regarding the role and function of the board and superintendent.

“THE MEANS VERSUS THE ENDS”

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MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION

- The greatest problem in communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished
- The cornerstone of a strong board-superintendent relationship depends on openness in all matters by all members and the superintendent
- No decision by the board is any better than the amount and kind of information provided
- Everyone must be willing to inform and be informed. A “no surprise rule” is vital
- Communication is the cement that holds an organization together



ABILITY TO HAVE HIGH LEVEL OF CONFLICT OF IDEAS WITHOUT PERSONAL CONFLICT

- If everyone is thinking alike, no one is doing much thinking
- Conflict of ideas does not mean absence of mutual support
- The board and superintendent need support from each other. A strong partnership is strengthened when board members support the superintendent from unjust criticism and when the superintendent defends the board members from unwarranted accusations.
- Constructive criticism should be welcomed, but destructive and unjust criticism should be exposed



CAREFUL PLANNING

- No one enjoys surprises...careful planning avoids most surprises
- The board must be involved in regular, at least yearly, planning for the district
- The board reserves judgement on all matters until hearing the recommendation of the superintendent and discussing the matter in a duty authorized meeting
- The superintendent presents strategic and other long range plans for review and approval by the board (as appropriate)



A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF DECISION MAKING PROCESS

BEFORE MAJOR DECISIONS ARE MADE:

- Alternatives are considered
- Background information is studied
- Ramifications of decisions are examined
- As much input as feasible is considered
- Decisions are made by people closest to the problem wherever possible
- People are informed of the decision and the reason for the decision
- Authority can be delegated ~ accountability cannot

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BEFORE VOTING, TRUSTEES SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES TWO QUESTIONS:

1. Am I voting solely on the merit of the issue and not being influenced?
2. Am I voting on what is best of the students of our school district?

PERIODIC EVALUATION

- The objective of evaluation is improvement
- The board, through the superintendent, monitors the progress of the district schools toward established targets
- The board evaluates the superintendent, based on agreed upon goals
- The board should evaluate its own performance at least yearly
- Evaluating people is often difficult but an honest, open discussion is essential for a successful working relationship



LEADERSHIP

A SUPERINTENDENT IS EMPLOYED TO LEAD, UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF :

- ❖ Trust
- ❖ Sensitivity
- ❖ Caring
- ❖ Vision
- ❖ Pride
- ❖ Motivation
- ❖ Human Skills

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- A strong board superintendent partnership provides direction, stability, and confidence to the total staff and community
- The partnership leads to high morale, people who work effectively and efficiently and most importantly....student's benefit

How to Build the Governance Team

What makes a good school board member?



— School board members serve their communities by working to improve student achievement in their area public schools. State and federal laws give school boards the power to develop policies governing school budgets and curricula. Boards are also in charge of school facilities. The board employs the superintendent.

What Does A School Board Member Need To Be Effective?



GOOD SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS NEED TO POSSESS CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS...

- Establishes a clear vision
- Works well on a team
- Focuses on students
- Sets and follows a budget
- Uses data to drive decisions
- Engages with the community
- Advocates for the community
- Accountable
- Collaborative
- Overcome setbacks
- Fosters team development
- Prioritizes continual improvement
- Creates individualized solutions
- Effective at self-assessment
- Committed to educational equity

What Are Some Characteristics Of An Ineffective School Board Member?

- ❖ Fails to prioritize student needs
 - ❖ Fails to represent the interests of the district
 - ❖ Fails to accomplish their obligations

Questions/Qualities/Issues /Forums/Concerns Being Asked...

- Goals
- Experiences
- COVID Crisis
- Student Mental Health
- Community Partnerships
- Fiscal Cliff
- Accountability
- Communication
- Expand equity
- Student safety & security
- Trust
- Support particular student groups
- Facilities
- College & career ready skills
- Etc., etc., etc...

Relationship Building Never Ends



The superintendent's ability to build strong relationships with each board member is essential to the success of the governance team, and ultimately the district

Relationship Building Never Ends



ACTION STEPS:

1. Make a conscious effort to get to know each board member individually to understand the issues and concerns of each person through regularly scheduled individual meetings
2. Do not assume to know board members' positions on issues
3. Provide opportunities at board retreats and social events for you and board members to share personal reflections, and dreams with one another

Creating A Team



Superintendents need to find ways to acknowledge the efforts of individual board members and the contributions of the board as a team. This valid recognition of their contributions will engender confidence and trust in the elected leadership of the board and encourage wide support for the district's efforts.

Creating A Team



ACTION STEPS:

1. Find ways to recognize individual board members and the board as a whole at board meetings and public events
2. Publicly thank board members for their many hours of work to prepare and participate in board meetings
3. Make a point to learn about the many ways in which board members are engaged in the community and make a point to share information with others