

**For School Boards
and Superintendents**

How to Develop a Performance Evaluation Process

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How to Develop a
Performance
Evaluation Process**

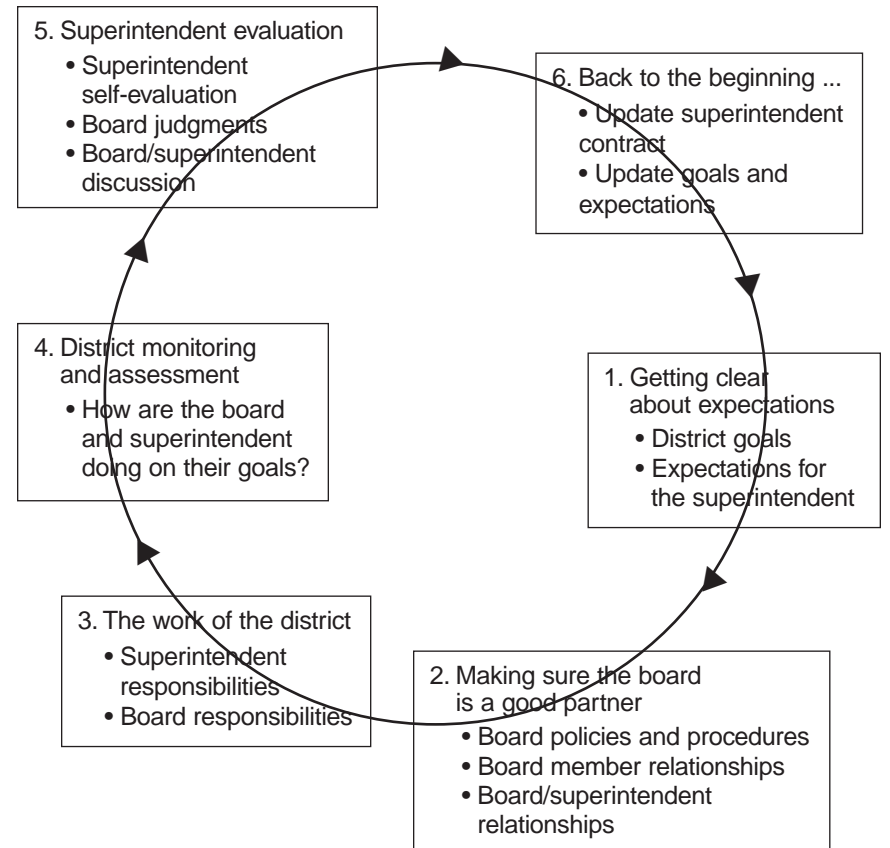


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Superintendent Evaluation Overview

The Annual Cycle



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A Note on Public Meetings

The Illinois Open Meetings Act permits the school board to hold closed meetings to consider the performance of specific employees. There is no exception to public meetings that is generally applicable to goal setting or planning.

The work of planning a process for evaluating the superintendent's performance, therefore, needs to be carried out in public meetings. On the other hand, any discussion involving the superintendent's actual performance or the board's evaluation of the superintendent can and should be conducted in a closed meeting.

Some meetings will be problematic, in that the board may discuss actual performance at the same time it is considering goals for the coming year. Advice of legal counsel may be necessary.

This is not a legal opinion; for legal questions, each school board should contact its own attorney.

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A CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING A SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION PROCESS

This list of steps can be used as a checklist for the school board and superintendent who seek to establish a new evaluation process or update an existing process. References noted in parentheses direct the reader to subsequent sections of this Guide where the relevant topic is discussed.

❑ **STEP ONE — Develop a Focus on Performance** – The school board and superintendent discuss and agree on some general understandings for superintendent evaluation:

1. Board members will be generally familiar with the law as it applies to the superintendent's employment. (See *"Superintendent Employment and the Law,"* page 12.)
2. Evaluation will focus on performance rather than skills and traits. (See *"Focus on Performance,"* page 18.)
3. The superintendent will be held accountable for meeting only those reasonable expectations agreed upon by the board in advance. (See *"About this Guide,"* page 10, as well as *"Some Benefits of Regular Evaluation"* on page 14 and *"Avoiding Common Errors,"* page 16.)

❑ **STEP TWO — Review Existing Documents** — The school board and superintendent should review the superintendent's job description and employment contract, board policies and

existing district and/or superintendent goals to determine whether they are current and relevant. If such documents do not exist or are out-of-date, the school board may want to focus first on the development of a mission and goals for the district.

❑ **STEP THREE — Agree on Expectations** — The board and superintendent discuss and reach agreement on what the school board will reasonably expect of the superintendent in terms of results.

1. Examine the superintendent's employment contract and job description and the school board's mission statement, goals and policies to identify expectations that have already been set forth, explicitly or implicitly. (See *"What is Needed to Get Started,"* page 20.)
2. Determine whether the school board has additional expectations regarding the superintendent's work with the board, management of the school district, improvements in district performance or other areas. (See *"Deciding What to Evaluate,"* page 22.)

❑ **STEP FOUR — Examine School Board Performance** – The board must search its own policies, practices and behaviors in order to determine whether they support or impede the superintendent's work. Step Four may prompt a fresh look at the expectations developed at Step Three, and some changes may be appropriate to help insure the superintendent's success. (See *"Examining School Board Performance,"* page 19.)

(continued)

❑ **STEP FIVE — Get it in Writing** — School board and superintendent endeavor to put into writing all of the expectations that the superintendent is expected to meet or live by.

1. Draft appropriate modifications to the superintendent's job description and/or board policies necessary to reflect expectations fully and accurately. (See *"Defining School Board Expectations for the Superintendent,"* page 27.)
2. Determine whether goals need to be written for the superintendent for any desired improvements and draft them. Incorporate any academic improvement goals identified in the superintendent's employment contract. (See *"Deciding What to Evaluate,"* page 22.)
3. Consider compiling a list of all expectations so that they are conveniently available in a single document.
4. Develop a schedule for progress reports and annual evaluations and put them on a yearly calendar. (See *"Developing a Schedule for Superintendent Evaluation,"* page 38.)

❑ **STEP SIX – Report Progress** – At intervals of one to three months, ask the superintendent to bring reports to the school board regarding progress toward goals, compliance with policies, and any related problems or concerns. (See *"Developing a Schedule for Superintendent Evaluation,"* page 38.)

❑ **STEP SEVEN – Evaluate Performance** – The school board evaluates the superintendent's performance compared with expectations. (See *"The Annual Review: Comparing Performance with Expectations,"* page 33.)

1. The superintendent provides a self-evaluation, complete with supporting data, that looks at progress toward goals, compliance with policies, and any other agreed upon expectations.

OPTION: If the school board has compiled a list of expectations, the list may be structured so individual board members can rate the superintendent's performance on each expectation. Step Seven would be the appropriate time to complete such evaluation forms and compile the results as a basis for discussion.

2. The school board discusses and reaches consensus upon its evaluation of the superintendent, determining whether there is a need for specific improvements in performance, and conveys that evaluation to the superintendent as a single viewpoint. A written summary should go into a "personnel file" for the superintendent that is accessible to the school board.

❑ **STEP EIGHT – Focus on the Future** – The school board follows up the annual evaluation with the following actions, as appropriate:

1. School board makes decisions regarding the superintendent's compensation and contract extension or renewal as called for by current local circumstances.
2. School board and superintendent agree on modifications to goals and expectations for the coming year as the basis for continuing evaluation. (See *"Developing a Schedule for Superintendent Evaluation,"* page 38.)

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Evaluation of the superintendent's performance serves some very important purposes for both the superintendent and school board. For example, evaluation should:

- help the superintendent be successful in meeting the expectations of the school board;
- provide the board with a sound basis for rewarding satisfactory performance or for taking corrective action in the event of unsatisfactory performance;
- generate the best possible performance from both the school board and superintendent.

An evaluation process that serves these ends need not be laborious or particularly time consuming, and will most likely save time and energy in the long run by making the board and superintendent a more efficient team. Unfortunately, establishing such a process for the first time requires substantial time and effort from both the board and superintendent. The purpose of this Guide is to help the school board overcome the obstacles and develop a superintendent evaluation process that supports effective leadership for the district and is fair to both parties.

Note that completion of the steps suggested herein will not produce an immediate evaluation. Rather, the aim is to establish a process that generates effective evaluation and growth in the months and years ahead. The most fundamental point for any personnel evaluation is this:

Any employee being evaluated – including the chief executive — must know what the employer expects and how those expectations will be evaluated. There can be no legitimate evaluation based on factors not made known to the employee in advance.

In other words, the focus of the processes suggested here is on the future (which can be changed) rather than the past (which cannot).

For a school board that has not yet established a process for evaluation of the superintendent, this Guide will help establish such a process. It also should be useful for the board that already has a satisfactory process, but needs to modify it to accommodate the academic improvement goals required in a multi-year employment contract.

1 Superintendent Employment and the Law

The relationship between the school board and superintendent is controlled by a combination of state law, contractual obligations and local traditions. Here are the relevant laws that both parties must understand from the outset.

1. All except very small school districts are required to employ a full-time superintendent. (105 ILCS 5/10-21.4) The superintendent must be certificated and meet qualifications established by state law. (105 ILCS 5/21-7.1 and 23 Ill. Admin. Code 1.310)
2. The board and superintendent must enter into a contract. (A superintendent with no written contract has an unwritten contract by operation of the Illinois law on continued contractual service, or tenure.) The employment contract may be for a term of one to five years. (105 ILCS 5/10-23.8)
3. A superintendent employed under a series of one-year contracts acquires tenure in the district after four years. This does not mean the individual acquires tenure as superintendent. Rather, it means the individual cannot be removed from the district without going through tenure dismissal procedures set forth in Sections 24-11 and 24-12 of The School Code. A superintendent employed under a multi-year agreement covering two to five years does not acquire tenure in the district. (105 ILCS 5/10-23.8)

4. Unless the employment contract specifically provides a different date, notice of the board's intent to not renew a contract (either annual or multi-year) must be given by April 1 of the year in which the contract expires. If notice is not given, the contract automatically extends for one more year. Notice must be served in writing by the deadline. (105 ILCS 5/10-21.4)
5. Illinois law requires that a multi-year administrator's contract embody specific performance-based components. The parties may, by mutual agreement, amend the performance-based contract anytime during a multi-year contract's term. However, if the performance goals set forth in the contract are not met, the contract may not be extended or automatically rolled-over during the term of the contract, although the parties may enter into a new contract. (105 ILCS 10-23.8)
6. To dismiss an individual during the term of a contract, the school board must have sufficient cause (e.g., prove breach of contract) and provide thorough due process procedures. An employment contract creates a property interest for the employee, meaning that the individual is entitled to receive benefits provided for in the contract, such as salary, unless the board demonstrates that, because of incompetence, insubordination, negligence, etc., the superintendent is not fulfilling obligations called for in the contract.

2 Some Benefits of Regular Evaluation

So why should a school board bother to evaluate its superintendent?

For one thing, genuine performance evaluation empowers a school board to discipline its chief administrator for failure to fulfill terms of the employment contract. In this respect, evaluation of the superintendent is one part of the school board's obligation to monitor school district performance and represents protection for the school district, the community and the board itself.

More important, however, genuine performance evaluation is possibly the very best way to ensure that the superintendent will meet the school board's expectations and avoid the need for disciplinary action of any kind. Fundamental fairness demands that the superintendent know what is expected and "how am I doing?"

In addition, a school board that gives serious attention to superintendent appraisal will be able to:

- assure the community that its schools are well-run, which is part of the board's governance obligation;
- encourage effective management of the school system, keeping it aligned with community aspirations and the vision of the school board;

- encourage regular growth and improvement in the performance of both the superintendent and the school system;
- make informed decisions about the superintendent's contract and compensation and defend the superintendent against critics;
- generate effective communication and understanding with the superintendent through in-depth discussion of goals and performance;
- address differences with the superintendent in a professional manner and in an appropriate forum;
- facilitate growth of the board-superintendent relationship;
- focus on the future.

3 Avoiding Common Errors

When members of a school board become dissatisfied with their superintendent, their thoughts often turn to “evaluation” as a way to justify dismissal or other disciplinary action. However, once dissatisfaction sets in, formal evaluation becomes a charade because the *real* evaluation has already occurred.

Unless the school board’s dissatisfaction stems from the superintendent’s demonstrated failure to meet agreed-upon standards, any disciplinary action will probably run afoul of the law, the precepts of fair play, or both. A dismissal during the term of a contract is rarely sustained legally by any type of last-minute evaluation.

Your school board should avoid some of the errors most commonly made by school boards that are addressing superintendent evaluation for the first time. These include:

- failure to have clear expectations for the evaluation process;
- treating superintendent evaluation as a form of punishment for past mistakes rather than as a means for future growth and as a way to improve the school district;
- neglecting to assess school board performance, which is a powerful factor in determining how the superintendent can function;

- failure to base school board expectations on what the community wants from its schools and what the staff is able to deliver within available resources;
- failure to be completely open and honest about what the board expects of the superintendent. The evaluation process must be responsive to the school board’s legitimate concerns regarding the board-superintendent relationship, the superintendent’s use of delegated authority and any limitations that the board expressly places on the use of that authority.

4 Focus on Performance

Performance evaluation should be clearly distinguished from the evaluation of traits or skills that a person brings to a job or demonstrates on the job. Performance implies results or impact. The emphasis, therefore, is future-oriented and always on improvement.

A school board that seeks first to evaluate a superintendent's traits will generate little change or improvement, because the same person will exhibit essentially the same traits year after year. It is possible that an individual's traits or abilities may present an obstacle to achieving desired results. In that case, a goal to correct a deficiency or acquire a new skill would become appropriate as a means to an end.

On the other hand, only a school board that articulates its expectations can indulge in meaningful evaluation of the superintendent's performance. A board that gives the superintendent a largely free hand with no clear guidance is one that does not set expectations. With no expectations, there is no way to gauge performance.

A school board that insists on making or reviewing all key management decisions cannot logically hold the superintendent responsible for decisions made by the board. The board can evaluate only the quality of the superintendent's advice or recommendations where those are provided.

In contrast, a board that uses policies to express its intent and set expectations for the district and for the superintendent has every right to monitor outcomes against those expectations. In fact, it has an obligation to evaluate so that expectations can be modified to suit changing conditions and needs.

5 Examining School Board Performance

How well anyone performs in a job depends heavily upon the "system" in which that person works and the quality of supervision. Anyone who works for someone else can surely attest to that simple fact. In his original 14 points – later adapted to support the "Total Quality Management" movement — W. Edwards Deming demonstrated that ". . . the bulk of the causes of low quality and low productivity belong to the system and thus lie beyond the power of the work force."

The same point applies to the superintendent. How well a superintendent performs depends in large measure on the "system" created by the school board. Prior to developing a superintendent appraisal process, therefore, a school board might advisably take these steps:

1. Undertake a thorough examination of its own performance. There are probably different standards to which a school board might aspire. Two sources for such standards are included as appendices to this Guide. One is the "Foundational Principles of Effective School Governance." Another is "Standards for School Boards." Both were developed by the Illinois Association of School Boards.
2. Consider the impact of board policies and other board actions on superintendent performance.

6 What is Needed to Get Started

The school board and superintendent need to identify any expectations, goals or standards that may be expressed in existing documents. Before beginning work on an evaluation process, therefore, they should be sure they have the following:

1. **A copy of the superintendent's employment contract.** Is it for one year or multiple years? If the latter, does it include standards tied to academic improvement and student performance that comply with the law and that the board and superintendent consider appropriate? If not, the evaluation process provides an opportunity to draft such standards for inclusion in the contract to meet the statutory requirement. Also, does the contract set forth requirements for evaluating the superintendent that need to be followed (or amended by mutual agreement)? Are there any performance goals or standards or other matters bearing on evaluation?

NOTE: Although it would not be necessary or advisable for every member of the board to possess a copy of the superintendent's contract, all should have access to a copy and generally understand its most important provisions.

2. **A job description** that sets out the superintendent's leadership and management responsibilities. Some job descriptions merely enumerate the chief executive's responsibilities by listing district operations. Some reflect the amount of

authority delegated to the superintendent and the standards expected by the board with respect to each responsibility. Others may express desired outcomes (or at least hint at them). At a minimum, the job description can serve as a checklist of reminders for board members as they think about their expectations for the superintendent.

3. **A copy of the school board's mission statement** and any goals and policies that are intended to drive the superintendent's work. These documents should be mined to discover the board's expectation for the superintendent. If goals do not exist, then the board and superintendent may want to undertake a goal-writing process. What are the board's aims for the district? What limits does the board place on administrative authority?
4. **School board policies** that express the board's expectations for the district, describe the limitations it places on executive authority, and regulate the board-superintendent relationship. Assessing that relationship and compliance with board policies represent legitimate focal points in superintendent appraisal.
5. **School district plans** that may have been developed by the board with involvement of the community and/or staff in order to give the district some direction. Are the plans still relevant? Do they represent a source of goals for the superintendent?

If these documents do not exist, the school board will most likely find itself starting from ground zero. Some source of expectations will need to be created before a board can begin to think seriously about a superintendent evaluation process.



Deciding What to Evaluate

What shall we evaluate? – that is the first question the school board must resolve (in cooperation with the superintendent). The second question is, How shall we evaluate it – and when?

If a school board does not know why it wants to evaluate something, then there probably is not much point in evaluating it. That's why a board must ask itself, "What do we care about?" The answer will usually be found in the school board's goals for the district and in any policies that express the board's intent or expectations.

Goals: School boards develop goals to spur improvement. *Goals for the superintendent typically are extensions of school board goals and should be carefully aligned with them.* Goals for the superintendent also may be developed from significant deficiencies in performance, but these typically evolve later, when the board actually draws conclusions about the superintendent's performance. When first setting appraisal in motion, the board's attention is on future expectations rather than past performance.

If the superintendent is working under a multi-year contract, then the academic improvement goals contained in the contract can be among those addressed in the evaluation process. Conversely, academic improvement goals developed for the evaluation process may be used in writing a new multi-year contract.

As an initial step, then, the board and superintendent might agree on a small number of goals for the superintendent that express the board's most immediate priorities to serve as a focus for district improvement and for the superintendent's evaluation. *The superintendent's goals should be aligned with the board's goals for the district, although the two sets of goals would not usually be exactly the same.*

Policies: A school board usually has numerous expectations for the superintendent that are not expressed as formal goals. But they do need to be expressed in some manner or the superintendent may not know they exist and the board will have no way to bring such expectations into the evaluation.

If the school board expresses its intent through written policies, then it may be a matter of asking the superintendent to provide evidence of compliance with those policies from time to time. Alternately, a school board might choose to produce a list of outcomes or performance requirements that it expects of the superintendent. A superintendent's job description can be written or modified to incorporate these requirements.

The kinds of issues that might be appropriate for policies or a job description are discussed below. However, in defining its expectations, a board should be sure that those expectations are all legitimate aspects of the superintendent's job and all reasonably doable under current circumstances. Some examples of possible "board expectations" are provided in Section 8, "Defining School Board Expectations for the Superintendent."

In selecting factors that need to be evaluated, the school board should ask itself whether it wishes to monitor the superintendent's performance in these areas:

1. **Providing leadership and assistance for the school board.** For example, does the board expect the superintendent to help plan and conduct productive board meetings? Is the superintendent expected to provide the board with information, make recommendations for board action, or

maintain open communications with the board? If the board wishes to evaluate the superintendent's performance in these areas, then the board needs to express its expectations in policy statements or in the job description.

- 2. Managing the school district organization.** The school board should be regularly monitoring organizational compliance with its policies. Some important aspects of compliance might reasonably be treated in the superintendent's appraisal, particularly if the school board has expressed expectations regarding the kind of organizational culture it seeks or placed explicit limits on the exercise of executive authority. That is, a board might reasonably expect its superintendent to pursue a collaborative culture that generates staff cooperation and teamwork. Or it might address a specific aspect of organization, such as staff development and evaluation or the upkeep of buildings and grounds. A board also may have policies that constrain the superintendent from engaging in improper conduct or expending unbudgeted funds. Such expectations can be expressed in policy and treated as part of the superintendent's evaluation.
- 3. Improving school district performance.** State law requires that any administrator's multi-year employment contract contain goals tied to academic improvement and student performance. Such goals should be included in the superintendent's evaluation. Moreover, although they do not always articulate them clearly, most school boards have aspirations for district financial health and levels of public support or satisfaction. Where the school board can express reasonable expectations, it also is appropriate to address these matters in its appraisal of the superintendent's performance. While it is unrealistic to hold the superintendent wholly accountable for student test results or public opinion or declining revenue, it is appropriate to see evidence of actions taken to meet expectations or even evidence of progress in some instances.

- 4. Other.** Are there any other aspects of superintendent performance that the board and superintendent agree are appropriate for evaluation? Look at the superintendent's job description, employment contract, and related policies for possibilities. Remember: if the board does not express the matter up front, it is not appropriate to hold the superintendent accountable for it later on.

Presumably, some of the factors identified in the above categories will already be stated as school district goals and may be appropriately modified as goals for the superintendent. Others will already be expressed in board policy statements regarding expectations for the district or limitations on authority (what the superintendent can or cannot do). Where these expressions of board intent already exist, they can be incorporated in the superintendent evaluation process simply by identifying them as such, with the agreement of the superintendent.

On the other hand, there also will be factors that the board and superintendent wish to include in the appraisal process but which are not already expressed in goals or policies. The board will have to decide whether to develop a goal for the superintendent or state its expectation as a policy. The latter may be the better approach where the expectation needs permanency, while a goal may be better suited for something that may in time be achieved and dropped.

Goal Setting. If the school board does not have district goals that are up-to-date and relevant, it would be a good idea to engage in some goal setting process.

Goal setting in its simplest form involves three big questions:

1. *Where are we now?* Here you assess current needs and problems and anticipate future challenges.
2. *Where do we want to go?* Here you determine what you want your schools to do for students and/or what you want in place in the district in one to five years.

3. *How shall we get there?* Here the board adopts its goals and the superintendent and staff adopt plans for reaching those goals.

Although goal setting is beyond the scope of this Guide, a board should expect to devote some time and effort to the process and to involve a wide range of district stakeholders. Goals for the district need to be aligned with the community's aspirations for the schools and be reasonably appropriate for the district's resources.

Multi-Year Contract. If the superintendent has a multi-year employment contract, it presumably contains academic improvement standards. A board may wish to make those standards part of its evaluation criteria. Or, conversely, newly-developed goals may provide appropriate standards to include in a multi-year contract.

For more detailed insights regarding the multi-year contract requirement, obtain a copy of *Performance-Based Superintendent Employment Contracts: A "How to" Guide*, from the Illinois Association of School Boards.

New Superintendents. In launching a search for a new superintendent, the typical school board advertises its vision and goals for the district with the aim of attracting candidates with similar perspectives. The search and hiring process also presents an important opportunity to review and renew goals as part of the new superintendent's orientation. The goal review process helps the board and its new superintendent become clear about their joint purpose. Moreover, the new superintendent is likely to bring a fresh perspective to the district's needs and aspirations.

8 Defining School Board Expectations for the Superintendent

The work of describing expectations for the superintendent will be an eye-opener for school boards and superintendents that have never discussed the delegation of authority. The superintendent can be properly held responsible only for matters over which he or she has effective control. Where the school board retains control for itself, of course, the board is responsible for the outcome. Most serious difficulties arise, however, where the question of control is unclear or where the school board merely assumed that the superintendent would be responsible (or vice versa).

The examples below illustrate the wide range of positions that a school board might take with regard to control. The District A School Board delegates authority to its superintendent to make the decisions, but subjects those decisions to certain standards or limitations. The District B School Board, on the other hand, wishes to make the decisions with input and recommendations from the superintendent

BUDGETING AND SPENDING

District A

Board Policy: The superintendent is authorized to make spending decisions subject to specific limitations; the school board is to be kept informed and asked to vote on actions where required by law.

Performance Expected: The superintendent will present

the school board with an annual budget that balances expenditures with projected revenues and ensures that school district expenditures do not exceed budgeted amounts except as specifically authorized by the school board.

District B

Board Policy: The superintendent makes recommendations regarding the budget and expenditures and the school board reviews the recommendations and makes the decisions.

Performance Expected: The superintendent will closely monitor the budget and provide the school board with information it needs to make wise spending decisions.

TEXT BOOK SELECTION

District A:

Board Policy: The school board adopts standards for instructional materials and authorizes the superintendent and staff to select textbooks that meet those standards, subject to a final vote of the board as required by law.

Performance Expected: The superintendent will ensure that textbooks selected for school board approval provide the best possible fit with curricular and instructional needs, have the support of the faculty, and will meet board standards for suitability.

District B

Board Policy: The school board reviews textbooks and makes selections.

Performance Expected: The superintendent will present the school board with recommendations regarding textbooks and provide such information as will assist the board in making informed decisions.

Additional Expectations

Below are more examples of expectations that a board might build into the superintendent's job description or simply compile into an evaluation list. In reviewing them, keep in

mind that what a school board has a right to expect is largely determined by the level of authority delegated to the superintendent. Moreover, what a superintendent might be expected to achieve also is heavily influenced by district priorities, available staff resources and other local considerations.

The superintendent provides professional leadership for the school board as follows:

1. Provides the board with ample information to support policy making decisions.
2. Effectively supports the school board in its efforts to maintain effective two-way communications with the community.
3. Ensures that each board meeting agenda includes any item that, by law, requires board action.

The superintendent ensures efficient and effective operation of the school district as follows:

4. Ensures that the district is in compliance with board policies.
5. Ensures that the district is in compliance with state and federal requirements.
6. Ensures that the staff understands the needs of school clientele and responds constructively to their concerns and problems.
7. Ensures that all public inquiries and complaints are handled promptly, courteously and fairly.
8. Ensures that the physical and financial assets of the district are protected from loss.
9. Ensures that district buildings and grounds present an acceptable face for the district.
10. Presents the school board with annual budgets that meet fiscal standards specified by the board and ensures that the district operates within budgeted amounts approved by the board.

The superintendent pursues continuous improvement in school district performance:

11. Creates a collaborative staff environment that produces a high level of teamwork focused on the mission of the school district.
12. Ensures that the staff has appropriate data regarding school performance and understands how to use it to identify needs and implement improvements.

Once a school board and superintendent have agreed on the expectations that will be evaluated, it may be helpful to compile those “standards” in a single document. The *Superintendent Evaluation Planning Form* on page 31 illustrates just one way to compile the board’s expectations, along with the information it will want to examine in assessing performance. Later, when the performance review is underway, members of the board can discuss each item and reach agreement on whether the superintendent’s performance is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Superintendent Evaluation Planning Form

Date of Adoption: _____

Review Period from _____ to _____

Signatures below indicate that the school board and superintendent have agreed on performance requirements for the superintendent, the indicators that the school board will examine to determine whether the superintendent has met each requirement, and the information the school board will need in order to measure performance.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENT # 1:

___ Goal or ___ Other Expectation

Indicators – The superintendent will:

Evidence needed to measure achievement and/or progress:

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENT # 2:

___ Goal or ___ Other Expectation

(continued)

Indicators – The superintendent will:

Evidence needed to measure achievement and/or progress:

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENT # 3:

Goal or Other Expectation

Indicators – The superintendent will:

Evidence needed to measure achievement and/or progress:

President, Board of Education

Superintendent

9 The Annual Review – Comparing Performance with Expectations

The annual performance review is where the school board compares the superintendent's results with the board's expectations. It also is the time when the board and superintendent find out how effectively they planned the evaluation. That is, did the board and superintendent at the outset reach a clear agreement on:

- the board's expectations of the superintendent?
- the factors that the board will evaluate in measuring the superintendent's performance against those expectations?
- the information that the board will want to see in evaluating the superintendent's performance?

If the board and superintendent can answer that, yes, they have fully completed these tasks, then the annual performance review should go quickly and smoothly. Both have a clear idea of what will be evaluated and the performance information that will be shared and examined. The performance review should produce real growth for the district's leadership.

On the other hand, if these tasks were not handled fully at the outset, any performance review will most likely be defective. The superintendent may be judged by undivulged standards, for example, or the board may want to see information that the superintendent was never asked to compile.

Of course, the performance review of each goal and expectation should be based on enough data and informed opinion

to overcome personal biases and “gut feelings.” Because the evaluation will provide the foundation for planning the next year’s goals, conclusions need to be based on the most informed judgments possible. In planning the evaluation process, therefore, a school board should feel free to request any data collection efforts that it deems reasonable, including surveys, financial analyses, and even independent program audits or evaluations. Moreover, the superintendent should feel free to ask the school board: “What evidence will you require of me to demonstrate that I have achieved my goals or fulfilled your expectations?”

On the other hand, the school board also should keep in mind that information comes with a price tag. Even when information is available from internal sources, the process of gathering and compiling it into a comprehensible form takes staff time and energy. When each board member wants to see something different, generating all of the information that every board member wants can be cost prohibitive. Therefore, members of the board need to reach agreement on a precise description of the information that the superintendent will be asked to provide. And that agreement should take into account the amount of staff time that can be devoted to the task.

No matter how much information may be gathered to help the board assess performance, of course, evaluation always comes down to subjective judgment. There is no point pretending otherwise. The only way to reduce the negative impact of subjectivity is to gather as much information as possible and base conclusions on the judgments of seven board members equally.

Keep in mind, however, that the performance review is no time to make changes in expectations or to ask for different kinds of measurements. The superintendent should be informed far in advance how the board plans to gather and use evaluative information. Early planning is particularly important if the school board should want extensive research or has some particular “indicator of effectiveness” in mind.

Unless the superintendent has misinterpreted the board’s original request for information, the board needs to live with what it said it wanted in terms of results and information for measuring those results.

When the time comes to assess the superintendent’s performance against the expectations agreed to with the board, who takes the initiative?

In some districts, members of the board use checklists to rate performance or a similar form to indicate “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” for each item. The forms are collected by the board president, who compiles the ratings into a single document and presents it to the superintendent. To use this approach, the school board will need to compile the goals and performance expectations in a single document. The *Superintendent Evaluation Review Form* on page 36 illustrates just one way to record individual and full board assessments.

In other districts, the school board omits the individual rating process. Rather, the superintendent presents to the school board his or her own self-assessment of performance on each of the goals and expectations that have been agreed to. The board then asks questions, conducts its own dialogue and arrives at a consensus on how well the superintendent did.

Which way should your board approach the evaluation? It’s probably a matter of personal preferences. When all is said and done, the school board should present the superintendent with one collective perception of his or her performance. The evaluation should be delivered orally in a face-to-face meeting and a written summary given to the superintendent with a copy retained by the board in a confidential “superintendent’s personnel file.”

Superintendent Evaluation Review Form

Review Period from _____ to _____

Date of Review _____

Directions: Review information compiled for the board to assess performance against each goal or other expectation. Decide whether the performance requirement has been met. Use the comments section to support your response.

#1 __ GOAL OR __ OTHER EXPECTATION:

Was the performance requirement met?
___ Yes ___ No

Comments: _____

#2 __ GOAL OR __ OTHER EXPECTATION:

Was the performance requirement met?
___ Yes ___ No

Comments: _____

#3 __ GOAL OR __ OTHER EXPECTATION:

Was the performance requirement met?
___ Yes ___ No

Comments: _____

Note: This form may be used to compile individual or group assessments.

10 Developing a Schedule for Superintendent Evaluation

In establishing a schedule for evaluating the superintendent's performance, your school board should first take into account the dates by which certain decisions need to be made, most notably decisions regarding the superintendent's compensation and contractual status. For example:

Will decisions regarding the superintendent's salary and benefits be made before or after salaries are set for other employees (including unionized employees)?

When must the board make a final decision to extend or renew the superintendent's employment contract? (In any year in which a contract is expiring, the superintendent must be notified in writing if the board wishes to not renew the contract; otherwise, the contract automatically renews for one more year. The deadline for notice is April 1 unless the contract provides a different date.)

With answers to these questions, the board can work backward through the calendar to establish dates for key evaluation tasks.

The sample schedule presented below assumes that the school board and superintendent have completed the research and development necessary to create an evaluation process. That is, they have agreed on annual goals that the superintendent will pursue during the coming year as well as the reasonable expectations for each goal and job responsibility that the board plans to evaluate.

Sample Schedule

Spring — The superintendent may develop plans to pursue each goal and share them with the school board to get feedback.

Summer and Fall — Board and superintendent meet in closed session to review the superintendent's progress toward goals and consider any issues related to policy compliance or performance expectations that either party wishes to raise.

Winter

1. The superintendent presents the school board with a self-assessment based on goal achievement, policy compliance and performance expectations. Report should be in writing and delivered at a closed meeting of the board. Board may request additional information.
2. Board and superintendent meet in closed session to discuss the superintendent's self-assessment report. Superintendent should be given an opportunity to respond to any concerns raised by members of the board.
3. School board members then meet in closed session without the superintendent present to share their individual observations with one another and to reach agreement regarding each aspect of the superintendent's evaluation. No issue not previously addressed with the superintendent should become a factor in the evaluation until the superintendent has been given an opportunity to respond.
4. Board president (or committee) compiles a written summary of the evaluation and provides copies to the superintendent and all members of the board.
5. School board meets in closed session with the superintendent to review its evaluation summary. At this meeting, the board and superintendent would also agree on any actions that the superintendent needs to take and consider adopting them as goals for the coming year.
6. Evaluation lays the groundwork for planning. Therefore —

based on the evaluation and new perceptions of district needs — the school board and superintendent agree on goals that the superintendent will pursue during the coming year and the specific responsibilities set forth in policy and/or the job description that will be evaluated.

Reasonable expectations are agreed upon for each goal and job responsibility that the board plans to evaluate.

February/March* — If decisions regarding the superintendent's compensation for the next fiscal year or contract renewal still need to be made, this may be the time for the board to meet without the superintendent to formulate those decisions. The board then should meet with the superintendent in closed session to discuss compensation and any contract decisions. In open meeting, the school board takes any required action regarding the superintendent's compensation and/or contract. (NOTE: There are many different ways to approach discussions of compensation and contract renewal. The key is to make the process support candor and fair play for both parties, as well as meet legal requirements.)

The process repeats:

Spring — The superintendent may develop plans to pursue each goal and share them with the school board to get feedback.

Summer and Fall — Board and Superintendent meet in closed session to review superintendent's progress toward goals and consider any issues related to policy compliance or performance expectations that either party wishes to raise.

* If the board plans to extend or renew a multi-year contract, or write a new one, the outset of the annual evaluation process might be a good time to consider the academic achievement goals that must be incorporated. That is, it may be appropriate to assess whether the superintendent has achieved goals contained in the employment contract and is, therefore, eligible for a contract extension (if the board wishes to grant it). Or it may be appropriate to draft new multi-year goals at this point for a new contract.

Appendix A

Additional Resources

Performance-Based Superintendent Employment Contracts: A "How to" Guide, Illinois Association of School Boards, 1998, 6 pages.

The Key Work of School Boards Guidebook, National School Boards Association, 2000, 95 pages.

Professional Standards for the Superintendency, American Association of School Administrators, 1993, 16 pages.

Getting There from Here: School Board-Superintendent Collaboration: Creating a School Governance Team Capable of Raising Student Achievement, New England School Development Council and Educational Research Service, 1997, 122 pages.

Thinking Differently : Recommendations for 21st Century School Board-Superintendent Leadership, Governance, and Teamwork for High Student Achievement, New England School Development Council and Educational Research Service, 2000, 33 pages.

Job Descriptions in Public Schools, Educational Research Service, 1994, 105 pages.

School Administration Under Attack : What Are The Facts? Educational Research Service, 1998, 38 pages.

Skills for Successful 21st Century School Leaders: Standards for Peak Performers, by John R. Hoyle, Fenwick W. English, and Betty E. Steffy, American Association of School Administrators, 1998, 195 pages.

Guidelines for a Superintendent's Contract, Illinois Association of School Boards and Illinois Association of School Administrators, 1997, 4 pages.

Coming to Order: A Guide to Successful School Board Meetings, Illinois Association of School Boards, 2006, 92 pages

Appendix B

Illinois Association of School Boards Foundational Principles of Effective School Governance

As the corporate entity charged by law with governing a school district, each School Board sits in trust for its entire community. The obligation to govern effectively imposes some fundamental duties on the Board:

1. The Board Clarifies the District Purpose.

As its primary task, the Board continually defines, articulates and re-defines district ends to answer the recurring question — who gets what benefits for how much? Effective ends development requires attention to at least two key concerns: student learning and organizational effectiveness.

- Ends express the benefits the school district should deliver, thereby providing the entire system with clarity of purpose and a clear direction. A School Board rarely creates district ends; rather, it most often detects them through listening and observing.
- In effective school districts, every part of the organization is aligned with the ends articulated by the School Board in written Board policy.
- Well-crafted ends enable the School Board to effectively and efficiently monitor district performance and assess organizational success (Principle 5).

2. The Board Connects With the Community.

The School Board engages in an ongoing two-way conversation with the entire community. This conversation enables the Board to hear and understand the community's educational aspirations and desires, to serve effectively as an advocate for district improvement and to inform the community of the district's performance.

- Effective communication is essential to create trust and support among community, Board, Superintendent and staff.
- The School Board must be aggressive in reaching out to the community — the district's owners — to engage people in conversations about education and the public good. In contrast, people who bring

customer concerns to Board members should be appropriately directed to the Superintendent and staff.

- A Board in touch with community-wide concerns and values will serve the broad public good rather than being overly influenced by special interests.

3. The Board Employs a Superintendent.

The Board employs and evaluates one person — the Superintendent — and holds that person accountable for district performance and compliance with written Board policy.

- An effective School Board develops and maintains a productive relationship with the Superintendent.
- The employment relationship consists of mutual respect and a clear understanding of respective roles, responsibilities and expectations. This relationship should be grounded in a thoughtfully crafted employment contract and job description; procedures for communications and ongoing assessment; and reliance on written policy.
- Although the Board is legally required to approve all employment contracts, the Board delegates authority to the Superintendent to select and evaluate all district staff within the standards established in written Board policy.

4. The Board Delegates Authority.

The Board delegates authority to the Superintendent to manage the district and provide leadership for the staff. Such authority is communicated through written Board policies that designate district ends and define operating parameters.

- Ultimately, the School Board is responsible for everything, yet must recognize that everything depends upon a capable and competent staff.
- “Delegates authority to” means empowering the Superintendent and staff to pursue Board ends single mindedly and without hesitation. A Board that does (or re-does) staff work disempowers the staff. High levels of Superintendent and staff accountability require high levels of delegation.
- Delegation is difficult for anyone accustomed to direct action. However, to appropriately stay focused on the big picture and

(continued)

avoid confusing the staff, members of the School Board must discipline themselves to trust their Superintendent and staff and not involve themselves in day-to-day operations.

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.

- A School Board that pursues its ends through the delegation of authority has a moral obligation to itself and the community to determine whether that authority is being used as intended.
- Unless the Board is clear about what it wants, there is no valid way to measure progress and compliance.
- A distinction should be made between monitoring data (used by the Board for accountability) and management data (used by the staff for operations).
- The constructive use of data is a skill that must be learned. The Board should have some understanding of data, but will typically require guidance from the staff.

6. The Board Takes Responsibility For Itself.

The Board, collectively and individually, takes full responsibility for Board activity and behavior – the work it chooses to do and how it chooses to do the work. Individual Board members are obligated to express their opinions and respect others' opinions; however, Board members understand the importance of the Board ultimately speaking with one clear voice.

- The School Board's role as trustee for the community is unique and essential to both the district and community.
- While the Board must operate within legal parameters, good governance requires the Board be responsible for itself, its processes and contributions. Board deliberations and actions are limited to Board work, not staff work.
- The Board seeks continuity of leadership, even as it experiences turnover in membership. The Board accomplishes this by using written Board policies to guide Board operations, by providing thorough orientation and training for all members, and by nurturing a positive and inviting Board culture.

Appendix C

Illinois Association of School Boards Performance Standards for School Boards

Advocates for Good Schools

1. The school board has a vision of excellence for the school district and has adopted a statement describing that vision.
2. The board's vision places the education and well-being of students above all other considerations.
3. The board's vision of excellence for the district is understood and supported by all members of the board, the staff and community.
4. The board exerts a positive influence on the community's aspirations for its children, encouraging all citizens to work toward excellence in their public schools.
5. The board has established a process for continually reviewing, improving and communicating its vision for the district.
6. The board and its individual members serve as advocates for public education.
7. The board ensures that the community is kept fully informed regarding the district's educational and financial condition and provides leadership in securing community support for additional revenue when necessary.

School Board and Administration

8. The school board states its intentions for the district through written policies that are clear, concise, up-to-date, and in compliance with state and federal laws.
9. The school board recognizes the superintendent as its chief executive officer and delegates to the superintendent — through written policy — full authority to manage affairs of the district.

(continued)

10. The board and superintendent have a clear, mutual understanding of their roles and work together in a climate of mutual respect.
11. The school board speaks with one voice. All members of the board recognize that only the board as a whole has the authority to make decisions or issue instructions to the superintendent. They do not attempt to individually assert authority that rightfully belongs to the full board.
12. The board requires the superintendent to develop written administrative procedures as needed to implement board policies.
13. Board policy requires that the district select for employment only those persons best qualified and that staff performance be evaluated regularly.
14. Each board member has a clear understanding of how requests and complaints will be handled.

Monitoring Performance

15. The board frequently monitors district performance and progress toward the board's vision of excellence.
16. The school board monitors the district's current and projected financial condition.
17. The board annually evaluates its own performance.
18. The board conducts an annual written evaluation of the superintendent's performance.

School Board Meetings

19. All meetings of the board and any committees are conducted in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act.
20. School board meeting time, place, length and facilities are appropriate for board, staff and public.
21. The board has written procedures for developing its agenda for meetings.
22. Each board member attends all regularly scheduled board meetings insofar as possible, and becomes informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings.

23. Prior to making decisions, the board reviews adequate information, allows time for thoughtful and deliberate consideration and fully discusses issues at publicly held meetings.
24. Members of the public, including students and staff, are made to feel welcome at all public meetings of the board.
25. The board has a policy that both encourages public participation in its meetings and establishes reasonable rules for such participation.
26. The board conducts itself with decorum and civility.

Board Member Conduct

27. In accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Illinois Association of School Boards, all members of the school board:
 - a) represent all school district constituents honestly and equally and refuse to surrender their responsibilities to special interest or partisan political groups.
 - b) avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety which could result from their position and do not use their board membership for personal gain or publicity.
 - c) recognize that a board member has no legal authority as an individual and that decisions can be made only by majority vote at a board meeting.
 - d) take no private action that might compromise the board or administration and respect the confidentiality of items discussed in executive session and other privileged information.
 - e) abide by majority decisions of the board while retaining the right to seek changes in such decisions through ethical and constructive channels.
 - f) become involved and knowledgeable about not only local educational concerns, but also about state and national issues.
28. Board members regularly take part in continuing education activities in order to build their governance skills and to keep informed on local, state and national issues.

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