

Guidance on Superintendent Evaluation

The superintendent evaluation is one of the board's most important tasks. It is directly connected to the board's responsibility for oversight and setting direction for the district. It is also one of the primary means by which the governance team establishes and strengthens a high-trust relationship between the superintendent and the board. It is a mistake of leadership to treat the evaluation as nothing more than an annually required procedure that must be fulfilled to meet policy or contract requirements. A high quality evaluation process is at the core of the board's governance work. Establishing a superintendent evaluation process requires the governance team to reach agreement in three general areas: content, instrument design, and process /timeline.

Content

What aspects of the superintendent's performance should the board evaluate? The answer is not simple. The job descriptions for superintendents are pages long. In their research on effective school leadership, Marzano and Waters identified 21 skills of leadership used by principals and superintendents, with 63 sub-skills. The California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs) outline six standards with 43 criteria. One sample instrument from a California district included seven areas for evaluation containing 59 criteria for the board to consider. The challenge is this: board members rarely have opportunity to observe or experience many aspects of the superintendent's work or responsibilities contained in all of these criteria.

In determining how to make the evaluation process most useful, it is important for boards and superintendents to consider the insight offered by Doug Eadie in *Five Habits of High-Impact Boards*: "... the primary objective of the [superintendent evaluation] process is to strengthen superintendent performance and the board-superintendent partnership." *This is best achieved by designing an evaluation process and instrument that helps the board and superintendent focus the superintendent's work in the specific areas of board-superintendent relations and performance that are of greatest importance.*

Core Content

Annual Goals to Support Long-Range Priorities - The superintendent evaluation is one of the primary means by which the board holds the superintendent *and the district* accountable. For this reason, district goals must figure prominently in the evaluation of the superintendent. However, it's important to note that some board members and superintendents distinguish between district goals and superintendent goals. Some maintain that the superintendent should be judged on goals that are within the superintendent's power to influence or control. If you accept this premise, then the board and superintendent must translate a district goal into the actual activity the superintendent will engage in or the outcome the superintendent will 'guarantee.'

Service to the Board - The superintendent is generally identified in the bylaws as the board's secretary. The relationship between the superintendent and the board is critical to ensuring smooth and efficient governance and administration. The board and superintendent both have a deep interest in maintaining good relations and this should be an important aspect of the superintendent's evaluation process.

Professional Standards – Based on the CPSELS

District Operations – Superintendents do more than lead change, and boards do more than ‘set direction.’ Both must demonstrate that district operations are conducted in an effective and efficient manner. Boards fulfill their oversight responsibility by monitoring district operations to ensure that they conform to the board’s expectations for performance. These areas might include financial operations, budget development and approval, etc.

Focus

Evaluating everything is neither practical nor beneficial. The board and superintendent must use the process to focus on the most important aspects of the superintendent’s work in the current year. This will change over time. A new superintendent might focus part of the evaluation on board service. A superintendent with limited budget experience might focus on finances. A board planning to pass a parcel tax might have the superintendent focus on work in the community necessary to support that effort. The board and superintendent can use the evaluation to support the most important challenges facing the district.

The Structure of the Board’s Written Evaluation

The board and superintendent must reach agreement regarding how the evaluation is structured, including the use of a summary, rating scales or rubrics, and the weighting.

The Summary

The summary can be placed at the opening or closing of the document. Its purpose is to explain how the board balances its judgment in each of the performance areas to support a single, overarching level of performance. This ensures that the board makes a final collective judgment that will support the decision they need to make regarding the superintendent’s contract and salary.

Evaluating Performance Areas

Rating Scales

Sample evaluation tools are available from many sources, and their use of ratings scales vary widely, using 3, 4, 5 and even 10 point scales. This may be a matter of simple preference, but consider that research on student grading has found that as the levels of differentiation increase, grading consistency among teachers decreases. In other words, if ten teachers grade the same piece of student work using a 100 point scale, the variance can be quite large. If they use a 4 point rubric, their individual assessments become much more aligned and consistent. This might be true for boards as well.

Odd numbered scales provide a ‘middle of the road option’: a 5-point scale can often produce a lot of 3s because people default to the average. Even numbered scales eliminate this. Boards and superintendents should agree on whether or not to use ratings scales and if so, how many points should the scale provide.

Rubrics

The alternative is to create clear explanations of the outcomes the board expects in each goal area. Then the board can quickly identify what would *not* meet that expectation as well as what would *exceed* that expectation. This rubric would be developed for each performance goal.

Hybrid

The board could use a rubric for critical content and a rating scale for other content. There is a parallel example for student assessment. Critical content is assessed through performance evaluation. But content that is ‘nice to know’ can be assessed with multiple choice tests. Simply put, the more important the criteria, the more detailed the evaluation process.

Reaching a final decision

Assume you have seven performance areas and you use a four point rating scale. Do some areas matter more than others? What final results would be considered unsatisfactory? What does the ‘GPA’ need to be in order for the superintendent’s performance to be judged satisfactory? This agreement must be established at the beginning of the process so that the superintendent understands the board’s expectations for performance.

Process

After the goals are established, the board and superintendent should check in regularly regarding the superintendent’s performance. Waiting a year for so important a conversation robs the superintendent of the opportunity for constructive input from the board. A cardinal rule of recreational scuba diving is ABC = **always breathe continuously**. For a good evaluation process, use ABC = **always be communicating**. The governance team should talk regularly about performance expectations. It is through these conversations that the superintendent and board avoid misunderstanding and confusion.

Process Options

Step 1 Superintendent provides self-assessment

The superintendent presents a written self-evaluation to the board in closed session. The board will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

Step 1A: Optional – Board members respond individually

Each board member could complete an individual evaluation of the superintendent. This can be done either at the meeting, or outside the meeting. Some members prefer to clarify their own judgments before hearing from other members.

Step 1B: Optional – Individual responses are integrated into a single draft evaluation

A member, often the BP but any member could do it, combines individual evaluations into a single document and sends it to all members.

Step 2 The board meets in closed session, without the superintendent, to discuss their reactions to the superintendent’s evaluation as a group, at the same or subsequent meeting, with or without individual assessments.

- The board should reach collective judgment; the results should not be a merely a collection of individual comments.
- The board must decide to what extent minority opinions will be reflected in the final document.
- In some instances, the board or individual board members may identify talking points that they wish to share with the superintendent in closed session, which may or may not be reflected in the written evaluation.

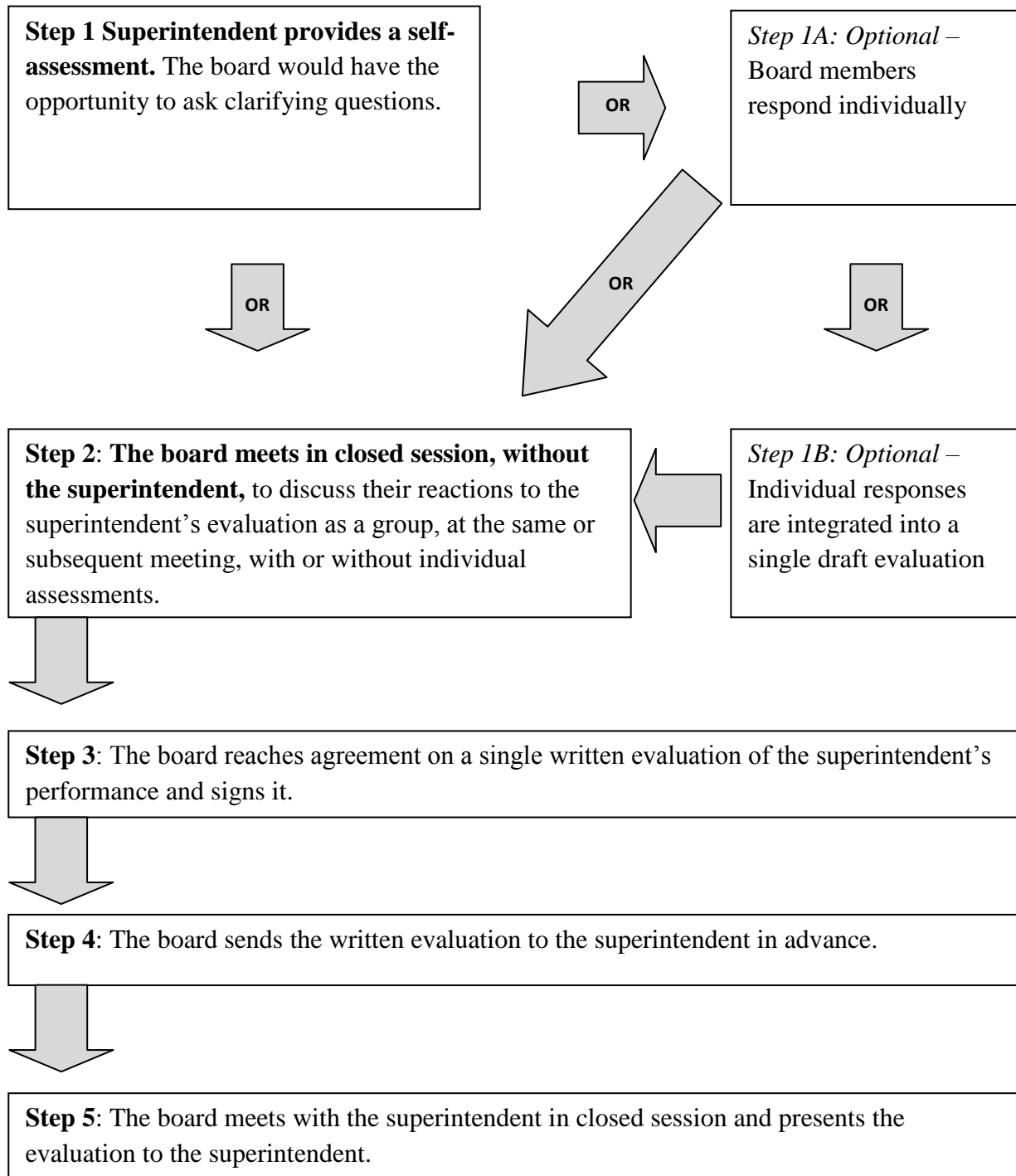
Step 3 The board reaches agreement on a single written evaluation of the superintendent’s performance and signs it.

Step 4 The board provides the written evaluation to the superintendent several days in advance.

Step 5 The board reviews the evaluation with the superintendent in closed session.

- The superintendent will have an opportunity to ask questions for clarification.
- The Superintendent may either:
 - request an additional closed session meeting to provide additional input; OR
 - sign the instrument if no further discussion or input is desired.

Superintendent Evaluation Process: Options Flowchart



Superintendent Evaluation: Name

A Sample School District

2060-61 School Year

Executive Summary

The overall performance of the superintendent is very strong. This assessment is based on two over-arching areas of performance. First and foremost, the superintendent's success in the five priority goals was very strong. In addition, the superintendent has engaged in additional efforts and accomplishments that he initiated or completed that contribute to the improvement of district operations. Finally, the superintendent's service to the board and his professional relationship with trustees has created a strong culture of trust and respect.

Note: **The board writes this part last** – providing an overall summary of the board's judgments, balancing the achievements and areas for improvement.

Part I: Achievement on Priority Goals

The overall performance of the superintendent with regard to the five priority goals is very strong. In four of the five goals, his efforts and accomplishments are either strong (goal 3), very strong (goal 4) or excellent (goals 1, 2 & 5).

Goal 1: The Superintendent will pursue land acquisition for the district to secure a site in area 51.

Average Rank: 4.0 Range of Scores 4 4 4 4
4

The superintendent's work in this area has been excellent. Lack of comment on the status of the bond was ...

Goal 2: Develop a Master Facility Plan for the district.

Note: **The use of rating scales** is the choice of the board and superintendent. If you do, consider a 4 point scale. Some boards prefer to assign descriptors to the numbers (for example, 4 = Very Strong).

In addition, you must decide whether to include the rating on the form. You may include just the average, or the range of scores, or both. Or you may use the scores just for the board, and not include them in the written evaluation.

Average Rank: 4.0 Range of Scores 4 4 4 4 4

The superintendent's work in this area has been excellent; he and his staff have developed an outstanding plan for the district.

Goal 3: The Superintendent will work collaboratively with "that other District" in their petition for the unification & keep Our Excellent District stakeholders informed about the process.

Average Rank: 3.6 Range of Scores 4 4 4 3 3

The superintendent's work in this area has been strong. The board recognizes that the superintendent has done very good job of coordinating a complicated effort.

The board believes that additional effort in providing information regarding the process and the status of the effort to the district staff and community will be beneficial.

Goal 4: The Superintendent will develop and implement a communications strategy that builds "buy-in" among district stakeholders, and creates a common commitment to establishing a culture of service in Our Excellent District.

Average Rank: 3.2 Range of Scores 4 4 3 3 2

The superintendent's work in this area has been very strong. Shifting the culture is a work in progress, and will take time, but very real progress has been made.

There was some confusion as to whether the metrics for this goal were clearly defined. However, the board does agree that some of the district's communication tools and strategies could and should be

improved, including an improved web site and feedback opportunities for all the district's stakeholders.

Goal 5: Implement the Program Improvement plan.

Average Rank: 3.8 Range of Scores 4 4 4 3 3.8*

The superintendent's work in this area is excellent. The Program Improvement Plan is comprehensive, and his passion for it is clear to the board and to the staff.

Part II: Achievement in Additional Areas

Beyond the five priority goals adopted by the board in summer 2007, the superintendent has engaged in a number of additional activities that have improved district operations and culture. Most notably the monthly meetings with trustees, serving as a substitute teacher, and meeting regularly with union leadership are examples of his efforts and his passions for leading the district by example.

Closing Remarks

It is a pleasure working with you.

Signature Lines for Each Trustees

Date _____

Note: Board signs *before* delivering to Superintendent.

Sup signs when he responds and returns, usually at the closed

Signature Line for Superintendent

Another USD

Superintendent Evaluation Instrument 2010-11

Part 1: Long-range priorities

Here the superintendent helps the board develop specific annual goals that support the achievement of long-range goals.

Priority One: EXAMPLE - Preserve and strengthen district fiscal health

Annual Goal:

Check One:

- **Met Target:** Kept spending within budget.
- **Exceeded Target:** Spending within budget and developed new revenue sources
- **Did Not Meet Target:** Spending exceeded budget.

Board Member Comments / Commendations / Suggestions for Improvement

Priority Two: EXAMPLE - Narrow the achievement gap for underperforming subgroups.

Annual Goal:

Check One:

- **Met Target:** Reduce the gap by 7%
- **Exceeded Target:** Meet above criteria and reduce the gap for one or more subgroups by 12%
- **Did Not Meet Target:** Gap reductions are less than 7%

Board Member Comments / Commendations / Suggestions for Improvement

Priority Three: Increase rigor and increase pathway options.

Annual Goal:

Check One:

- **Met Target:** Write what the superintendent must do?
- **Exceeded Target:** What would exceed expectations?
- **Did Not Meet Target:** What would constitute failure?

Board Member Comments / Commendations / Suggestions for Improvement

Part 2: Board Service / Relationship

These criteria are adapted from *Superintendent Governance Standards* (ACSA / CSBA 2001). The board and superintendent may wish to identify a *limited number* (one or two) for focused improvement.

Supports Governance

1. Provides leadership based on the direction of the Board as a whole.
2. Helps the board build a unity of purpose and a common vision.
3. Implements the vision, goals and policies of the district.

Supports Governance culture

4. Helps the board create a positive organizational culture.
5. Recognizes and respects the differences of perspective and style on the Board
6. Treats board members and all staff, students, parents and community members with civility and respect.

Supports Governance Operations

7. Assists the board in preparing for and conducting meetings.
8. Provides all members of the Board with equal access to information.
9. Is responsive to board member communication.

Supports Governance Development

10. Supports the Board's continuous professional development.

Check One:

- Met Target:**
- Exceeded Target:**
- Did Not Meet Target:**

Board Member Comments:

Part 3: California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

These six over-arching standards from the CPSELs include 21 specific criteria. The superintendent may wish to recommend to the board a *limited number* (one or two)

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

1. Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community
2. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth
3. Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment
4. Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources
5. Modeling a personal code of ethics and developing professional leadership capacity
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context

Check One:

- Met Target**
- Exceeded Target**
- Did Not Meet Target**

Board Member Comments:

Part 4: District Operations (Optional)

Here the board and superintendent may wish to select a limited number of operational functions that require closer monitoring or change.

Check One:

- Met Target**
- Exceeded Target**
- Did Not Meet Target**

Board Member Comments:

Part 5: Other Commendations

Board members may comment on additional achievements by the superintendent not covered elsewhere in this evaluation.

Part 6: Overall Evaluation

Overall the superintendent has:

- **Exceeded Expectations**
 - Exceeded expectations in at least # of # areas.
 - Met Target on most/ all other goals.
- **Met Expectations**
 - Met expectations on # or more areas.
 - Did not meet target on no more than # areas.
- **Did Not Meet Expectations**
 - Did not meet targets on # or more areas.

Note: 'Exceeded Expectations' or 'Met Expectations' will be considered satisfactory performance regarding the board's decisions regarding superintendent contract and salary.

Summary comments highlighting the board's perspective on the superintendent's performance consistent with and supportive of the overall rating above.

Superintendent Response:

Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here. Response is inserted here.

Signature lines for superintendent _____

Signature lines for each board members _____