Reflect, Refine, Succeed

School Board Self-Evaluation for Effective Governance



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Board Self-Assessment

"We do not learn from experience...

We learn from reflecting on experience"

-John Dewey

The Board is also responsible for examining its own work as a governance team and how its work supports progress toward district goals

Objectives

- Understand the legal, ethical, and governance responsibilities of board service.
- Identify characteristics of effective school board governance.
- Use a practical board self-evaluation process.
- Analyze common governance challenges through realistic scenarios.
- Identify **one action** that can strengthen board effectiveness.

Guiding Principle

Reflection → Insight → Action → Improvement

Reflect. Refine. Succeed.

Great boards don't just evaluate the superintendent

Great boards evaluate themselves

How well are we doing our job as a governing body?

Complete this sentence in the chat:

"An effective board is one that…"

Does your functionality as a board matter?

Social science research on this indicates the most effective boards that have an impact on overall achievement of the district are:

- **Highly functional, data-driven with shared goals**
- **Hold cohesive working relationships with administration**
- **Keep true to mission**

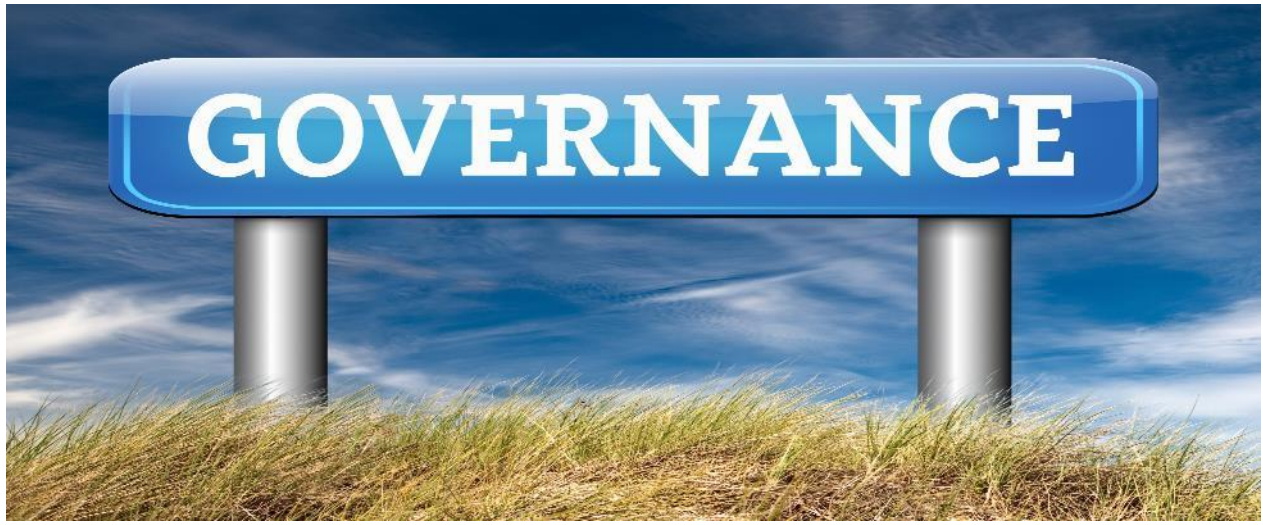
Conversely, dysfunctional leadership can have the opposite effect and often waste money on "adult issues" instead of students as a priority.

Board Self-Evaluation Helps a Board:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Strengthen relationships
- Identify governance strengths
- Identify areas for development
- Improve meeting effectiveness
- Increase accountability
- Build trust
- Focus on student outcomes



Governance Mindset



School board members have two hats:

Individual
Ask questions
Study issues
Represent constituents
Bring perspectives
Participate in discussions

Governing Body
Acts collectively
Sets direction
Establishes policy
Provides oversight
Holds the superintendent accountable
Monitors results

Are we governing as a board or operating as individuals?



Quick Reflection

Which is more difficult for boards? Answer in the chat

A Speaking up when something concerns me

B Supporting the board's collective decision after discussion


ETH IC
LE G A L

The Legal and Ethical Foundation

Board evaluation should begin with,
"Are we fulfilling our responsibilities?

Governance vs Administration

<u>Board</u>
"What?" "Why?" "What results?"

<u>Administration</u>
"How?" "When?" "Who?"



What Should We Evaluate?

Five Dimensions of Board Effectiveness

Dimension	1	5
1. Board Unity & Teamwork	Struggling	Strong
2. Governance & Role Clarity	Unclear	Clear
3. Meetings & Decision-Making	Ineffective	Effective
4. Superintendent Relationship	Reactive	Trusting & Accountable
5. Student & Community Focus	Inconsistent	Consistent

The Board Self-Evaluation Cycle



Reflect—What are we doing well?

Assess—Where are our gaps?

Discuss—What is contributing to the gap?

Refine—What should we change?

Act—What will we do differently?

Reassess—Did it make a difference?

A self-evaluation without action is simply a story


SCENARIOS

Scenario #1: The Difficult Meeting

During a board meeting one board member repeatedly interrupts the superintendent, challenges staff recommendations, and introduces operational questions.

Another member says:
“That’s not our job. We shouldn’t be discussing this.”

The first member responds:
“I’m elected to represent the community, and I have every right to ask these questions.”

Breakout Discussion—4 minutes

Discuss:

1. What governance issue is present?
2. What responsibility does the board president have?
3. What responsibility does the the individual board member have?
4. What could the board do differently next time?



Debrief (look for):

- Role clarity
- Respectful discourse
- Board norms
- Chair leadership
- Superintendent relationship
- Keeping individual concerns within appropriate governance channels

Scenario #2: “I’m Just Asking Questions”

A board member receives several complaints from community members about a school principal.

The board member:

- Calls the principal directly
- Requests personnel information
- Questions teachers about the situation
- Contacts the superintendent
- Raises the issue publicly at the next meeting

The board member says, “I’m just doing my job..”

Discussion Question

What should the board member have done differently?

Governance Check:

- Appropriate board oversight?
- A potential role-boundary concern?
- An operational/personnel matter that should be handled through the superintendent?

Why does this matter for self-evaluation?
Because the board should evaluate whether its own behavior supports effective governance.

Scenario #3 When Board Members Disagree

The board has a difficult policy decision. Three members strongly support one approach. Two members oppose it. After the vote, one member says:

“I voted against it and I’m going to tell everyone in the community why the majority is wrong.”

Can board members disagree?



How does a board:

- Encourage healthy disagreement?
- Respect individual perspectives?
- Make decisions collectively?
- Maintain public trust?
- Support implementation after a decision?

Reflection:

We can disagree during deliberation without becoming divided in governance.



Board Culture

Which is most important for an effective board culture?

A. Trust

B. Respect

C. Accountability

D. Communication

E. All of the above

Your Board's "One Big Thing"

Look at your ratings:

What ONE area, if improved, could have the greatest positive effect on our board's effectiveness?

Our strength is..

Our opportunity is…

The behavior we need to change is…

The result we want is…




TIME FOR ACTION!

From Reflection to Action

Turn insight into commitment

1. ***What will we change?***
2. ***Who will lead/support it?***
3. ***What will we do differently***
4. ***When will we begin?***
5. ***How will we know it is working?***
6. ***When will we revisit it?***

The 10-Minute Board Self-Evaluation

Rate your board 1-6
1 = Significant improvement needed
3 = Inconsistent
6 = Consistent strength

Governance

1. We understand the difference between governance and administration
2. We remain focused on the board's role
3. We make decisions based on policy, evidence, and student needs

The 10-Minute Board Self-Evaluation, cont

Meetings

1. Our meetings are purposeful and productive
2. We ask questions that advance understanding
3. We stay focused on governance rather than operational details

Community Trust

1. We act in the best interest of students and the district
2. We model ethical behavior
3. We communicate honestly and respectfully with our community

The 10-Minute Board Self-Evaluation, cont

Board Relationships

1. We listen respectfully to one another
2. We disagree without becoming disagreeable
3. We maintain confidentiality and appropriate boundaries

Superintendent Relationship

1. We provide clear direction
2. We support the superintendent while maintaining accountability
3. We communicate through appropriate channels

Equity & Cultural Responsiveness

Self-Evaluation Should Include:
"Who is experiencing our decisions—and who may not be represented in our perspective?"

- Do we listen to a broad range of community voices?
- Do examine data across student groups?
- Do we consider access and opportunity?
- Do we avoid making assumptions about families?
- Do we create an environment where different perspectives can be heard?
- Do our policies and practices reflect the needs of our diverse communities?

Board Culture: What are We Modeling?

Every board meeting communicates something

What does your board model?

- **Respect or disrespect?**
- **Listening or reacting?**
- **Questions or accusations?**
- **Collaboration or division?**
- **Transparency of defensiveness?**
- **Student focus or adult conflict?**



The Governance Check



Before Acting, Ask:

1. Is this within the board's authority?
2. Is this a policy/governance issue or an operational issue?
3. Do we have the information needed to make a responsible decision?
4. Are we acting collectively or individually?
5. Are we following law, policy, and ethical expectations?
6. Have we considered the impact on students and the community?
7. Does this decision support the district's mission, goals, and strategic plan?

What Makes Self-Evaluation Work?

DO

- ✓ Make it regular
- ✓ Keep it confidential when appropriate
- ✓ Focus on behavior—not personalities
- ✓ Use evidence
- ✓ Discuss patterns
- ✓ Identify actionable priorities
- ✓ Revisit commitments



What Makes Self-Evaluation Work?

DON'T

- ❑ Use it to "grade" individual members
- ❑ Turn it into a political exercise
- ❑ Use it to settle disagreements
- ❑ Avoid difficult conversations
- ❑ Collect data without acting on it

Key Principle:

The purpose is improvement—not punishment

Reflect. Refind. Succeed

Effective governance is not a destination. It is a practice.

- Reflect on what you're doing
- Refine what isn't working
- Repeat what works
- Keep the focus on students you serve



Fin…

I learned…

Our board could improve…

One thing I will do differently is…



In the chat, share ONE word describing how you want your board to function.

What will your board do differently because of today's conversation?

Why self-evaluate?



- Holds board members accountable to themselves, the board, staff and community
- Exercises your power as a board to model positively for the district
- Improves decision making by enhancing a common understanding of philosophies and goals.
- Provides a starting point for effective goal setting and long- range board improvement planning

EVALUATION OF SCHOOL BOARD/

Board SELF-EVALUATION The board shall meet as necessary for the purpose of appraising its functioning as a board and to evaluate board performance. The appraisal plan approved by the board will be facilitated by the board President working with the Superintendent.

Evaluation instruments for board operation may be used in the process.

The Superintendent and others who regularly work with the board may be asked to participate in all or a portion of the appraisal.

Areas of board operations and relationships that may be appropriate to consider during the evaluation of board procedures may include, but are not limited to:

- Board meetings/decision-making process.
- Policy development/implementation.
- Board/District goal setting.
- Curriculum and instruction management/program.
- Fiscal management/resource allocation.
- School plant planning/management.
- Board member orientation.
- Board member development.
- Board officer performance.
- Board member relationships.
- Board-Superintendent relationship.
- Board-community relationship.
- Legislative and governmental relationships.

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THANK YOU

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