

Editor's Note: The following can be the foundation for a Superintendent – Board dialogue to establish a Second Contract (social contract) of agreed operational behaviors.

Some Do's and Don'ts of Board of Education-Superintendent Relationships

For the Superintendent

Do:

1. Talk with and give the same information to all Board members.
2. Avoid surprises. Keep the Board informed as situations develop.
3. Tell the Board what you believe - not what they want to hear. Keep the Board informed about what goes well as well as what didn't go well.
4. Be prepared for Board meetings by sending materials out in advance.
5. Seek Board input on major decisions. Get Board approval on sensitive issues.
6. Be willing to make unpopular recommendations, when necessary.
7. Present alternatives to the Board in an objective manner.
8. Orient and assist new Board members.
9. Help the Board set goals for the district.
10. Admit your mistakes.

Don't:

1. Embarrass Board members.
2. Expect 100% approval of all of your recommendations.
3. Overwhelm the Board with information.
4. Make public statements before informing the Board.

For the Board of Education

Do:

1. Handle complaints properly. Communicate concerns about the district to the Superintendent first.
2. Avoid bringing up surprises. Keep Superintendent informed or ask that an item be placed on an agenda.
3. Be open and candid with the Superintendent. Communicate praise as well as areas of concern to the Superintendent.
4. Be prepared by reading all materials sent out in advance.
5. Act only as a whole Board, not as individuals in Board matters.
6. Act on tough issues despite community pressures.
7. Ask for more information if not ready to act, especially when a resident raises an issue.
8. Evaluate the Superintendent.
9. Lead meetings skillfully.
10. Keep information confidential.

Don't:

1. Embarrass your Superintendent.
2. Take it personally when the majority of the Board votes against your viewpoint.
3. Expect the Superintendent to act precisely as you want and expect.
4. Encroach in administrative areas (micro manage).

Both the Superintendent and the Board of Education can:

Show loyalty and support to one another
Be open and candid with one another
Not harbor hidden agendas
Not circumvent each other
Remain flexible and have a sense of humor!