

GENERAL GUIDANCE

THOUGHTS

There is no right way to do a wrong thing.

EVENT + REACTION = OUTCOME

The Three-Part Decision Question, “Is it right, is it time, is it me?”

The Rules for Successfully Engaging Others

A. Be Visible

(people trust more the people they know)

B. Do What You Say You Will Do

(don't say you will do it unless you can do it)

C. Trust in Others

D. Affirm Shared Values

(honor diversity but find common ground)

E. Develop Capacity in Others

F. Keep Hope Alive

(vision a positive today and tomorrow)

BOARD OF EDUCATION

A. Establishing the Agenda - Establish regular agenda-setting procedures

Set Meetings with the Board President

- A. Set a regular time to meet.
- B. Invite other Board members to join the meeting if they have an interest.

Consider scheduling the executive session before the meeting so the Board can go home early. With the executive session first, the Board will most likely make necessary decisions in a timely manner, so as not to keep the public waiting. If the executive session is after the meeting, set a go home time.

Try to establish an annual agenda for you and the Board - set reports and activities for each month. (It usually takes a couple of years to put this in place.)

B. Communications with the Board

1. Agenda Planning

Keep running files (or stacks) for upcoming meetings, two or three months ahead.

2. Weekly Confidential News and Notes

- A. Send confidential written news and notes (Superintendent's opinion) to the Board members on a regular basis (once a week or twice a month).
- B. Let the Board know of all critical issues and problems.
- C. Log all events (date and time); it helps you remember what you want to report to the Board.

3. Emergency Calls

Ask the Board when they expect to be called (which items and what events they want calls on).

4. Ask the Board members to call you regarding things they hear that they think you should know.

C. Working with the Board

1. Sound out the Board before finalizing your recommendations on an issue. Many times Board members hear and know more than you do.
2. Treat all Board members equally and fairly. What you give one Board member (verbally or written), give to all Board members. Say, "A Board member asked about _____."
3. You should run the district and the Board should make policy. Don't let the Board run the district.
4. Let the Board control itself.
 - A. It helps to have a skilled Board President.
 - B. Have the Board President and another Board member work with an errant Board member.
 - C. Other Board members will be reluctant to take on an errant Board member.
5. Find a constructive focus for the Board.
 - A. Always have three of four annual projects (Board goals) as the focus of Board activities.
 - B. Try to get the Board members and community leaders together on education issues.

D. Board Committees

1. Superintendents usually don't like Board member committees.
2. Board Member Committees
 - A. Can duplicate all decisions making.
 - B. You can have yourself tied up every night with committee meetings.
 - C. Personal and Finance committees are the biggest problem.
 - D. You need to protect yourself from Board members.
3. The Board should operate as a "committee of the whole".
4. Make sure that any Board created Advisory Committees understands that they don't make decisions. Advisory committees should have a written charge, a working timeline, and a deadline for reporting to the Board.

E. Board of Education Support

1. Orient new Board members.
2. Use conferences, workshops, and retreats for goal setting and problem solving.
3. Use specialists where needed, such as:
 - A. Negotiators
 - B. District Superintendent (BOCES)
 - C. BOCES personnel

- D. President of the County School Board
- E. Facilitators
- F. Accountants, lawyers, school doctor, facilities advisors, financial advisors, etc.

The School Attorney

1. The school attorney is the Board's attorney. But, you need ongoing legal help to do your job.
 - A. The local school attorney is usually okay for local issues (contracts, residency votes).
 - B. Labor Relations lawyers are for personnel issues.
 - C. School Law lawyers are needed for special problems regarding students, staff, hiring.

Working with Administrators

1. Try to work with any administrator who was passed over for your job.

You are there to help.

2. Use the administrators that are in the district.

A. They know the community.

B. They know the school district power base.

C. Use them for advice in decision-making.

3. Let your administrators know what you expect from them.

A. Forewarning of problems heading your way.

B. Emergencies you and the Board should know.

4. Free administrators rather than buy them.

Your administrators should be able to operate freely within the parameters you set.

5. Administrative Evaluations

A. The Superintendent should control the administrative evaluation process - giving administrators input to the process.

B. The Superintendent should control the salaries of administrators.

Goal Setting

1. Work with the Board and administrators to decide a year or two in advance where you, they and the district are going -District Goals.
2. Share your Superintendent's Goals with the Board, staff and community.
3. Let the Board see your goals, administrators' goals, building staff goals - and evaluations.

Planning

1. Do all the tasks you are assigned or that you agreed to do.
2. Decide which teachers, classes, or people you will see you this week, and see them.
3. Expect others to plan and carry through on their commitments.

Superintendent Availability

1. Always be available to anyone at school - if you are not on the phone of in a meeting talk to anyone.
2. Set up a filter or intercept in your office and at home to find out who is calling and why, but do not to deflect the caller.
3. Ask the right questions of all you interact with - students, parents, and employees. There should be a trust, but not a blind trust.

Monitor the Business Operation

1. The business operation must be properly monitored.
2. Spend the time and energy to know what is going on.
3. Initial every P.O. and all overtime requests personally.
4. Get reports (assessments in writing).
 - A. Ask all the necessary questions.
 - B. Take time, especially at the last moment, to be sure it's right before you release it to the Board/public.

Support Staff Relations

Treat support staff the same as you do teachers.

- A. Include support staff in school opening meetings.
- B. Treat events in the lives of support staff the same way as teachers and Board members.
- C. Provide in-service, conferences and special awards for your support staff (staff person of the year etc.).

Superintendent Community Relations

1. Visit all community leaders, big and small, during your first month in the district. (Ask each Board member to make a list of community leaders you should visit.)
2. It takes a long time to know a community.
3. Ask community leaders for advice on issues. (Everyone has an opinion.)
4. Live and shop locally - paying a few cents more is worth it.
5. Realize that whatever you say, to anyone, anywhere, will be repeated many times.
6. Write to your community after every Board meeting.
7. Get out of your office and your school and visit:
 - A. Staff.
 - B. Key community people.
 - C. Key places in the community.
8. Be supportive of community events. Attend everything. You are a community leader and your evenings belong to the community.
9. Image is important. Present yourself well.
 - A. Public speaking.
 - B. Dress.
 - C. Participation.
 - D. Writing (if you can't write well, get help).

10. Never say anything but the positive. Learn how not to get down and dirty.
11. See those people who are less and less connected with the school-community, such as senior citizens and business executives who live in other communities.
12. Sell your school (and yourself) to the community.
13. Hold a major alumni event every 2 years.
14. Rumors are out there. Get used to it.
15. Get the accurate information out there first. It can shortcut the rumors. Tell what happened and why. NEVER say “No comment”.
16. Get every message down to 2 or 3 bullets and repeat, repeat, repeat them.
17. The Board will change, but the community remains the same.
18. Make telephone “cold calls”. Three each week. This can be uncomfortable, but people will appreciate it.

Superintendent Development

1. Use organizational meetings (BOCES, NYCOS, etc.) to learn what's going on and establish support networks.
2. Set up a professional reading plan.

Transportation

1. Ride the bus routes.
2. When a pick-up point challenge comes to you, visit the site and walk the route personally. Look at: time of day, speed of the traffic, line of sight, angle of the sun, type of neighbors, shoulders of the road etc. Stop and visit the family so they know you were at the site.

Superintendent Evaluation Process

1. You may want to adjust the superintendent evaluation process in your first few months on the job
 - A. Do a self-evaluation before the Board does your evaluation.
 1. See that the Board's goals are completed.
 2. See that the administrator's professional staff's goals are completed for the year.
 3. List all major accomplishments for the year - the Board's and yours.
2. You should respond in writing to all Board evaluation of you, ALWAYS.
3. If you are not getting clear messages on how you are doing, you may want to ask for a mid-year review.
4. If evaluations are informal, ALWAYS write a summary and have the Board President sign it.
5. The Board may feel it does not have first hand information on your performance, but DON'T let them do a survey on you.
 - A. It is the Board's task to do your evaluation.
 - B. The Board must understand that some employees, community members, students will like you and some won't.
6. All superintendents are interims, "If you want loyalty, get a dog."
7. Negotiate the evaluation process, and put it in your contract.

8. Have a Board policy that lays out all the parameters of the superintendent evaluation process. Then put wording in your contract that says the policy will not be changed without agreement between the Board and the Superintendent. The policy should include:
 - A. Confidentiality of the process.
 - B. Board must reach a consensus on each item.
 - C. Any area marked “unsatisfactory” must have both a written explanation and suggestions for improvement.

Levels of Responsibilities

1. Have a written policy on:
 - A. Who can or can't accept a problem.
 - B. Level of entry, i.e. where the problem goes for initial review.
 - C. Levels of review, same as a chain of command, i.e. who review decisions.
2. Understand and accept the legal rights of a citizen to use the administrative review process.
3. If an administrator's decision was right, leave it in place. (I will not substitute my judgment for the judgment of the administrator.") If an administrator's decision was wrong, tell him/her to change it before you have to. Only in the extreme should you override the decision of an administrator. If you have a problem administrator, fix him/her.

Negotiations

1. Know the history of the contract language.
2. Know the long range impact of any decision.
3. Know the past practice of the District.
4. Be sure you know that you are doing before you agree to anything.