

The Board/Superintendent Team

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The Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools have distinct and separate roles. Together they form the district's leadership team. Before an effective working relationship is established, a superintendent and Board must develop a mutual understanding of their respective roles, then review and validate this understanding on a regular basis. An honest and candid discussion of the functions of each role will greatly enhance the partnership between the superintendent and the Board.

As CEO of the school district, the superintendent is responsible for:

- Implementing policy set by the Board of Education
- Making recommendations to the Board based on his/her best educational knowledge regarding:
 - Personnel
 - Curriculum
 - Budget
- Informing the Board of all vital matters pertaining to the school district
- Developing and maintaining an efficient and effective management system for the school district
- Delegating appropriate responsibilities and assigning duties to other employees of the district, but ultimately being accountable for their actions
- Recommending all candidates for employment and being directly and indirectly responsible for their administration, including annual evaluation of performance and professional growth plans
- Developing and improving instructional programming of the school district including being alert to advances and improvements in educational programming
- Preparing and submitting a preliminary budget to the Board and managing the financial operations of the school district

Positive working relationship

Research has shown that a positive working relationship between the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools can directly impact student achievement in the district. It is fairly easy to surmise that if there is continual acrimony and disruption between the Board and the superintendent, very little will be accomplished in the district and students will be negatively impacted by the lack of harmony and cohesiveness. There are several actions that can be taken to ensure a good working relationship will exist.

Full disclosure: The cornerstone of a strong Board/Superintendent of Schools partnership is the frank disclosure of school problems to the Board members. Complete and thorough disclosure requires the superintendent to be open and receptive to inquiries from members of the Board, that she/he be knowledgeable about the district's activities, and that she/he provide information as quickly as possible.

Frequent two-way communication: The superintendent should provide timely oral and written communications of pending or emergency items. Board members should reciprocate, immediately informing the superintendent of citizen's concerns. The Board must be well informed to make wise decisions. The superintendent is responsible for keeping Board members informed on an ongoing basis (not just at meetings). Before major decisions are made, Board members should have an opportunity to read background information, examine alternatives and consider the implications of alternative actions.

Careful planning: No one enjoys surprises and careful planning will avoid most of them. The Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education should plan together. Planning begins with the Board adopting yearly objectives for the district, by which the Board provides direction for the superintendent. The superintendent oversees the implementation of the objectives. An excellent approach to global planning that involves the community is strategic planning.

Informal interaction: The superintendent must interact regularly with Board members. They should attend conferences together and participate in school activities. Through such informal interaction they become more sensitive to each other's interests and values, without, of course, breaching professional relationships.

Periodic evaluation: The superintendent and the Board should evaluate the work of the school district at sessions scheduled throughout the year. Periodic evaluations, in addition to the regularly scheduled formal annual evaluation, keeps the Board apprised of the progress on district goals. At these meetings the Board should evaluate the superintendent, discuss the relationship between the Board and the superintendent and agree to any modifications necessary.

Mutual support: Both parties need support from the other. A strong partnership is strengthened when Board members support the superintendent from unjust criticism and the superintendent, in turn, defends Board members from unwarranted accusations.

**Adapted from Michigan Association of School Boards*