

Superintendent Evaluation: A Systems Approach

Introduction

The process of evaluating a superintendent is a very important tool in the entire improvement efforts of a school district. It defines expectations, enhances communication, prioritizes district goals and forces the board of education to focus its attention on holding the superintendent accountable for improving the achievement of all students.

A new approach to superintendent evaluation that reflects a systems approach is particularly in order in these times of increased accountability. A process as important as this one should be guided by a set of ethics-values and beliefs-that under gird the work so both the superintendent and the members of the board of education can operate in an integrity-filled manner. The following principles are offered as an ethical compass to guide this important work.

Operating Principles

A comprehensive Superintendent evaluation process must:

1. **Link to academic, social and emotional growth for all students in the system.**

Rationale: Multiple measurers of all types of student learning must be included in the definition of accountability.

2. **Recognize the importance of a superintendent's work in the moral dimensions of leadership to facilitate a better quality of life for all groups, both inside the school community and in the greater community.**

Rationale: The larger work of the superintendent is about shaping the future of the community and having a positive effect on people's lives.

3. **Align with the six Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL).**

Rationale: The six Iowa Standards for School Leaders have recently been adopted by the Department of Education and recognized as guidelines for all school leaders. (Each of the six standards is imbedded in Sample 1: Superintendent Evaluation Form in the accompanying packet of materials.)

4. **Have research-based criteria about effective Superintendent behaviors which are substantiated by measurable data from multiple sources and are legal, feasible, accurate and useful.**

Rationale: Standards of any kind are only effective if they meet propriety, utility, feasibility and accuracy measures. (Examples of multiple data sources are a superintendent self-assessment; a portfolio compiled by the superintendent; 360° feedback; the school improvement plan; artifacts that address previous goals, school board meeting agendas, etc.)

5. **Provide opportunities for personal and professional growth.**

Rationale: Evaluation processes must address the whole person and be oriented toward continuous improvement. (See Sample 2 (Professional Growth Plan) and Sample 3 (Remediation Form) in this packet.)

6. **Be ongoing and connected to school improvement goals.**

Rationale: An evaluation is a process, not a once a year conversation, and must be connected to Comprehensive School Improvement Plans. (See part II, Job Targets, of the Superintendent Evaluation Form, and Suggested Timelines for Superintendent Evaluation in this packet)

7. **Connect the district's goals with its publics' vision for their schools.**

Rationale: Goals cannot be developed in isolation; district goals must reflect the community's highest hopes for its public schools.

8. **Be intended to improve performance not prove incompetence.**

Rationale: An effective evaluation process is predicated on a spirit of providing feedback for growth, not on finding evidence of shortcomings. If a board is considering evaluation for the purposes of termination, other processes should be employed.