

Key Points Relating to Superintendent Evaluation

(CSBA's 2004 "Maximizing School Board Governance: Superintendent Evaluation" publication, available through CSBA's Bookstore, contains a more extensive discussion of superintendent evaluation.)

Boards must have agreed upon core district beliefs, a district vision and/or mission, and must know what their priority areas are. Only then, can they effectively evaluate the superintendent.

Superintendent evaluation should be a communications process that serves as a model for district evaluation at all levels. It should be:

- Goal-based (These should be "district" goals set mutually by the board and superintendent in priority areas for the coming year, not "board" goals, nor "superintendent's" goals.)
- Data-driven
- Ongoing
- Collaborative (Working together as a governance team, the board and superintendent should also agree on success indicators for each goal.)

In this way, boards use superintendent evaluation as an important leadership tool to focus and align all district efforts, an opportunity for the governance team to reflect and talk about where the district is going, not just this year, but with an eye to the future.

It should:

- provide an opportunity for acknowledging and commending the superintendent's accomplishments;
- support growth of the superintendent and sustained improvement for the district; and,
- if necessary, identify weaknesses or problems that need to be addressed by the superintendent to ensure continuous progress.

CSBA recommends two primary content sources

- Progress toward district goals
 - Identify district goals and one or more success indicators for each goal.
- Personal evaluation based on the Superintendent Governance Standards (See page 7.)
 - It's most important to focus on progress toward goals, but if boards want to evaluate additional aspects of the superintendent's job performance, the most effective way is to identify an area the board wants to evaluate, choose a related standard as an area of focus, then, with the superintendent, agree on several activities or measures that will indicate the superintendent is successfully meeting the standard that was chosen.



Many governance teams have instruments that work well for them. If those instruments are effectively helping monitor progress on district goals, it's sensible to continue using them. If the governance team is looking for a new format for evaluation, a performance-based evaluation sample that does an effective job of aligning superintendent evaluation with district goals is provided below.

Sample CSBA recommended format

Progress toward District Goals

Priority Area: _____

District Strategic Goal(s) *	Success Indicator(s) for this Goal **	Current Status (Progress Report/ Results)	Evaluation (Commendations/ Recommendations) ***
<i>Individual board member's narrative summary statement (Commendations/ Recommendations):</i>			

Evaluating Personal Qualities

Superintendent Governance Standard: _____

Success Indicator(s) for this Standard **	Current Status (Progress Report/ Results)	Evaluation (Commendations/ Recommendations) ***
<i>Individual board member's narrative summary statement (Commendations/ Recommendations):</i>		



* While goals should be reality-based and thus affordable to achieve, boards should encourage staff to look for creative ways to fund goals and make sure budget priorities support the goals.

**Success indicators: Success indicators are the measures that tell you when you have accomplished your district strategic goals. They are tools with which we measure progress. Success indicators may be quantifiable, behavioral changes, support mechanisms or resource shifts. What's important is that they focus on results, not the processes used to get results. The indicators we use to monitor results may vary dramatically from district to district. It's vital that governance teams allow adequate time to discuss and agree what data will tell them a goal has been successfully met.

*** Evaluation: We strongly recommend that board members write a narrative evaluation. What is written can be brief, but describing one's perspective on performance and accompanying any negative with a recommendation for improvement assures more thoughtful evaluation than simply providing a numerical (e.g., 1-5) or phrase (e.g., "clearly outstanding," "exceeds expectations," "needs improvement") ranking. No matter what method is used to record evaluation, it is very important that the board have a conversation about the reasons behind different members' perspectives and that what is presented to the superintendent is a board consensus. While individual points of view are important, the superintendent must respond to the collective agreements of the board and cannot be expected to respond to individual board member expectations.

Superintendent evaluation process checklist

(Any timelines or specific list of procedures should be based on the understanding there will be ongoing communications between the board and superintendent throughout the year and regular progress reports from the superintendent to the board. The more formal superintendent evaluation process will add to that ongoing process, not replace it.)

To prepare for the evaluation the board should:

- √ Have the superintendent prepare an evaluation packet for the board that includes a progress report toward district goals, the superintendent's self-evaluation of accomplishments and performance and a review of action taken to address recommendations of the board from the previous year. This is a sound practice and the packet can be presented at a pre-appraisal meeting or distributed to board members individually.
- √ Review the contractual agreement between the board and the superintendent. The contract should reference the purpose, procedures and criteria for conducting the superintendent's evaluation and may detail the timelines and process for the evaluation. The current contract may be included in the evaluation packet prepared by the superintendent. (The superintendent's contract and addendums are public documents and each board member should have a copy of the full contract.)



- √ Review any board-adopted policies relating to the superintendent's job description or evaluation process.
- √ Review the annual goals set at the beginning of the evaluation year.
- √ Have each individual board member record his or her perspective on progress against these goals using success indicators, methods and instruments chosen by the board and superintendent as most appropriate for the current year. (How successfully has the superintendent met the expectations? Have there been unforeseen extenuating circumstances we must take into consideration?)

Use the previous evaluation as a baseline. If no previous evaluation exists or if the system being used has fundamentally changed, this year's evaluation will be used as a baseline for future evaluations. In this case, since no comparable evaluation exists and no clear direction may have been given to the system, the board will need to be careful about making judgments.

- √ Come together as a board to have a conversation about the evaluation to ensure a summary consensus document accurately reflects the opinion of the board as a whole.
- √ Decide who will summarize and combine the individual evaluations to create a consensus document and how the document will be formatted. **The evaluation should be a composite of individual board members' opinions, but there should only be one final evaluation representing the board's collective judgment. This is the evaluation the superintendent must respond to.** This evaluation should be a narrative summary which may include a compilation of individual evaluations with all written comments intact or numerical ratings listed, or may record only a group consensus on each area evaluated. This summary document should be distributed to all board members for review and approval. (The superintendent does not receive a copy at this time since the evaluation is still being worked on by the board.)
- √ Distribute copies of the completed revised evaluation to the board and superintendent.

The board will now be ready to meet with the superintendent to discuss his or her evaluation. This meeting should include the full board, be conducted in closed session and not include any other items on the agenda. In this meeting, the board should:

- √ Present the board's consensus on both successes and areas where improvement is needed. The evaluation should also acknowledge unforeseen circumstances that may have prevented some goals from being realized.
- √ Provide opportunity for clarification, questions and responses.

Meeting in open session, the board, working with the superintendent, who will be working with staff, should:



- √ Using the previous year's priorities and goals as a baseline, agree on updated priority areas and set goals for the following year that the governance team believes will reasonably move the district toward its long-range vision.
- √ Agree on success indicators for each new goal or revised indicators for ongoing goals, and on progress reports the board would like to receive.
- √ Discuss the governance team's level of satisfaction with the evaluation instruments and methods we used this year. Decide whether to modify our evaluation system for next year based on the new goals we have set.

Sample calendar for evaluation of the superintendent

The annual timeline for a superintendent's evaluation will vary from district to district, often based on the initial date of employment or terms contained in the superintendent's contract or board policy. It is a good idea to adopt a schedule which follows the school calendar so progress toward annual goals can be made during a school year. As governance teams develop an evaluation timeline, it's important to keep in mind the timeline for receiving student assessment results. We should also consider the most effective timing for influencing program and budget planning. Ideally, once a timeline is set, the superintendent will be responsible for assuring the evaluation is scheduled on the agreed upon timeline. However, we should be aware of those timelines and monitor that we are meeting them. A sample calendar is provided below.

March

Superintendent gives board the evaluation packet. (Includes superintendent's report on goal achievement, self-evaluation, contract and/or policy language on evaluation.) Board and superintendent review procedures, timeline and evaluation instrument.

Board president distributes evaluation instruments to individual board members.

April

Board members meet in closed session to discuss their individually completed evaluations, share their perspectives and come to consensus. Board president then compiles the data and gets a rough draft of the summary document to each board member for review and any comment.

What's important is that the full board must take time to meet and have a conversation as part of this process.

Copies of the approved summary document are distributed to the board and the superintendent.



May

In closed session, after all parties have received copies of the board evaluation, governance team meets to discuss the evaluation. The superintendent also may have an opportunity to share his or her observations about the board pertinent to the evaluation.

Following the annual formal evaluation meeting of the superintendent and board, a written summary of the discussion and evaluation is signed by board president and given to superintendent.

In open session, governance team may hold conversations about initial goals for the next year. (Some governance team discussions on district priorities already will have begun as part of the budget development process.)

June

In open session, governance team finalizes annual goals and indicators of success for coming year, again making sure the budget supports the goals, reviews the evaluation procedure and makes recommendations for the coming year. **It is very important for the governance team to schedule enough time to set future goals in a thoughtful manner. This includes agreeing on success indicators and clarifying board expectations concerning progress reports.**

July

Superintendent develops and presents board with administrative action plans for achieving goals.

August

Superintendent communicates goals and action plan to district administrators.

December/ January

Mid-year progress report. Superintendent reports and governance team discusses progress on goals. (If we have been receiving monthly or quarterly updates, this will be a more extensive opportunity to discuss progress.)

In a year when incumbents are not running again, the governance team may want to schedule the mid-year progress report in November to have the benefit of the existing board members' comments. Of course, a January discussion of mid-year results should also be scheduled to inform new board members of the current year priorities and year-to-date results.



REFERENCE

Superintendent Governance Standards

As a corollary to the CSBA Professional Governance Standards, a team of California superintendents including the ACSA Superintendents Committee and the CSBA Superintendents Advisory Council developed a set of Superintendent Governance Standards in 2001.

The Superintendent:

- Promotes the success of all students and supports the efforts of the Board of Trustees to keep the district focused on learning and achievement.
- Values, advocates and supports public education and all stake holders.
- Recognizes and respects the differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community — and ensures that the diverse range of views inform board decisions.
- Acts with dignity, treats everyone with civility and respect, and understands the implications of demeanor and behavior.
- Serves as a model for the value of lifelong learning and supports the Board’s continuous professional development.
- Works with the Board as a “governance team” and assures collective responsibility for building a unity of purpose, communicating a common vision and creating a positive organizational culture.
- Recognizes that the board/superintendent governance relationship is supported by the management team in each district.
- Understands the distinctions between board and staff roles, and respects the role of the Board as the representative of the community.
- Understands that authority rests with the Board as a whole; provides guidance to the Board to assist in decision-making; and provides leadership based on the direction of the Board as a whole.
- Communicates openly with trust and integrity including providing all members of the Board with equal access to information, and recognizing the importance of both responsive and anticipatory communications.
- Accepts leadership responsibility and accountability for implementing the vision, goals and policies of the district.



