

Key Points Relating to 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.
- Measurable
- 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.
- 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 and professional qualities based on the *Superintendent Governance Standards* (see page 5).
 - 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 *Superintendent Governance Standards* are a useful tool.

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 are the measures that tell you when you have accomplished your district strategic goals. They are tools with which we measure progress. Success indicators should be quantifiable, behavioral changes, support mechanisms or resource shifts. What is 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 is vital that governance teams allow adequate time to discuss and agree what data will tell them a goal has been successfully met.

We strongly recommend that board members use a narrative format for their evaluations. What is written can be brief, but should describe one's perspective on performance and include recommendation for improvement wherever negative review is given to ensure more thoughtful evaluation than a numerical (e.g. 1-5) or phrase (e.g., "clearly outstanding," "exceeds expectations," "needs improvement") ranking. No matter what format 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.

Sample superintendent evaluation procedure checklist:

Any timelines or specific list of procedures should be based on the understanding that 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. Frequent communication with the board ensures there will be no surprises in the evaluation process. The annual evaluation is not the place to "spring" major findings or conclusions that were never raised earlier in the year.

- √ Agree on priority areas and with the superintendent, set goals for the coming year that the governance team believes will reasonably move the district toward its long-range vision. Again, the atmosphere should be calm, conversational and invite the superintendent's full participation.
- √ Discuss level of satisfaction with the evaluation methods and instruments used during the current year. Decide whether to modify the evaluation system for next year based on the new goals.
- √ 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 current contract may be included in the evaluation packet prepared by the superintendent.
- √ Review any board-adopted policies relating to the superintendent's job description or evaluation process.
- √ Review the annual goals.
- √ Individually evaluate progress against these goals using 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.

- √ 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 to which the superintendent must respond.** The summary evaluation may be 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).
- √ The board should come together to have a conversation about the consensus document to ensure it accurately reflects the opinion of the board as a whole.
- √ Distribute copies of the completed revised evaluation to the board and superintendent. This is a confidential document.
- √ Meet as a full board with the superintendent to discuss his/ her evaluation. Schedule the evaluation as the only item on the agenda. The meeting should be in closed session unless the superintendent requests that it take place in open session. The final evaluation should adopt a professional tone, noting both successes and areas where improvement is needed, as well as acknowledging goals that could not be reached due to unforeseen circumstances.
- √ Create an atmosphere that enables the superintendent to express any concerns he or she may have regarding the respective roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent. The superintendent should not be penalized or threatened for discussing this issue in a frank and open manner with the board at this time.
- √ After the process is complete, review the process and meet to set goals for the coming year.
(Understanding the impact of the board's actions and behaviors on the superintendent's ability to accomplish goals, the board should take collective responsibility for scheduling periodic board self-evaluations. These may **not** be held in closed session).

Suggested Sequence 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. Many districts adopt a schedule which follows the school calendar so progress toward annual goals can be made during a school year. It is important to remember that student achievement information is often not received until the following school year. Districts should create a schedule that meets their specific needs.

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governance team finalizes annual goals and success indicators for coming year, ensures the budget supports the goals, reviews evaluation procedure and makes recommendations for 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.
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Superintendent develops and presents administrative action plan for achieving goals to the board.
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Superintendent communicates plan to staff and implementation begins.
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mid-year, the superintendent reports to and has a discussion with the board on progress toward goals. Additional progress reports may be scheduled as necessary throughout the year.
Step 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Board and superintendent review specific procedures, timeline and evaluation format for current year's evaluation. ▪ Superintendent prepares and presents evaluation packet for the board that includes superintendent's report on goal achievement, self-evaluation, contract and/or policy language on evaluation. ▪ Board president distributes evaluation forms.
Step 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Board members individually evaluate the superintendent's performance, using instruments and methods agreed to by the governance team. ▪ The full board schedules a closed session meeting to have a conversation and develop the final document. ▪ The board president and/or other designated person compiles evaluations and creates a summary document that is reviewed and approved by the full board. ▪ Copies of the approved confidential summary document are distributed to the board and the superintendent.
Step 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In closed session, after all parties have received copies of the board evaluation, the board and superintendent meet to discuss the evaluation. ▪ At this time, the superintendent has the opportunity to respond to the board's evaluation. ▪ Following the annual formal evaluation meeting of the superintendent and the board of education, the final evaluation is signed by the board president (or the entire board) and superintendent. The final signed document is provided to the superintendent for inclusion in his/her personnel file.
Step 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Initial goals are set for the next year. ▪ Board and superintendent review process, format and timeline for upcoming year.

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. We highly recommend that these be included as part of the Professional Governance Standards adoption.

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 stakeholders.
- 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.