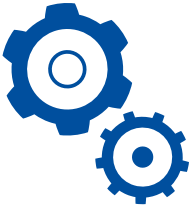


ADVANCING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: THE SCHOOL BOARD'S ROLE



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School boards across Ohio focus on advancing student achievement in their districts. This can include more questions than answers: How are students doing academically, socially and emotionally? How is progress measured? Do students have the resources and support needed to achieve as they move through the school district? Do the provided learning options prepare them for future jobs, certifications, military careers or postsecondary education?

Recognizing a school district as a system

A school district is an interconnected system. Any action taken may produce a desired result in one area while yielding an unintended result in another. Addressing student achievement is complex, and district leadership teams — the board members in conjunction with the superintendent and treasurer — must find solutions at different levels in the system. Board members should review student opportunity and achievement within the context of the district as a system and consider unintended results as ideas are presented.

Leadership qualities that advance student achievement

Thirty years of research has shown that six areas are critical for advancing student achievement:

- responsible governance
- accountability
- creating conditions for success
- community engagement
- public school advocacy
- relationships



RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE: DETERMINING A PATH



School boards that support high levels of student learning establish a clear vision for the district and support a variety of opportunities that produce results for all students. District leaders should review the district's mission or purpose with the community and clarify its vision and priorities before developing a plan focused on achievement outcomes for all students.

What can the board do to demonstrate effective governance? Commit to:

- understanding the school board's role and responsibilities;
- publicly adopting goals for achievement and instruction, and ensuring those goals remain a priority in the district;
- focusing on long-term district goals;
- setting high expectations for student learning;
- ensuring all parts of the system align around students' learning needs, from resource allocation and funding to curriculum and assessments.

ACCOUNTABILITY: MEASURING RESULTS



The school board works with the superintendent to create policies that meet state and federal laws, encourage recommended best practices for improving student achievement and set the standards for an improvement or strategic plan. This should include determining the frequency of progress and data reports about the plan, which should be included in the board's regular meeting so that some accountability measures are reported on a regular basis.

Specifically, the board should:

- determine a schedule for timely reviews of the district plan, including an annual review and recommendation for new objectives.
- Ensure a high degree of coherence between the district plan and school improvement plans.

Additionally, an effective board holds the school district accountable for meeting student learning expectations by evaluating the superintendent on

clearly communicated performance expectations and written goals focused on specific outcomes for student learning. Likewise, a school board should assess its performance, including reviewing its governance functions, progress toward board performance goals and the effectiveness of board meetings.

When working with the administrative team, the board should be able to answer the following questions to maintain accountability:

- What are we trying to accomplish and what is the rationale for doing so?
- Which resources are needed to accomplish the goal?
- What will it look like if we succeed?

POLICY: CREATING CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS



Board policy determines how and what students are taught and how schools manage students and school personnel, providing the opportunity to shape student and staff experiences through thoughtful discussion and debate. A board that leads by policy is more likely to address the most significant issues by aligning the school district's actions to meet the board's vision and the district's educational mission. In essence, a board that adopts policy focused on student learning designs conditions to ensure the success of all students.

The board must adopt policies addressing educational philosophy; school district goals and objectives; and instructional goals and objectives. These policies must reflect the district's philosophy and goals as stated in the strategic plan.

When reviewing policies, consider:

- Are your policies compliant with state and federal laws?
- Do they define and align administrative responsibilities?
- Do they support the district's mission and vision?
- Are they reflective of your community?
- Are they enabling and empowering your staff to impact students?
- Are they driving students to succeed?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: AN ONGOING DIALOGUE



To accurately represent the district's families, board members and administrators need to understand the community's aspirations for its schools and students. Community engagement is an ongoing dialogue between district leadership and community members about a shared problem or opportunity. Through this dialogue, the district can build consensus with the community that supports student opportunities and achievement, create opportunities to share the progress being made in the district and seek help from parents, businesses and local organizations to address barriers to student learning.





RELATIONSHIPS: WORKING AS A LEADERSHIP TEAM



Effective boards model responsible school district governance by working as an effective and collaborative team. The school board, superintendent and treasurer jointly lead within their respective roles while committing to a common purpose, a clear mission and a shared sense of responsibility to achieve the district's vision. Strong, collaborative leadership by school board members, the superintendent and the treasurer is a cornerstone for high achievement.

To sustain its focus on improvement, a board must focus on its own training and professional development, integrating these practices into the board calendar and meeting agendas. School boards should focus on their role and responsibilities; understanding performance data and progress being made as well as any variations in performance across the district; and the practices, programs and challenges that are unique to the district.

Conclusion

Although the board addresses many issues, putting student learning front and center is its main purpose, and that focus must encompass serving all of the district's students well. By focusing on effective teaching and learning for all students; practicing responsible governance; following the path set by the district's mission, vision and goals; and using data and on-going organizational training to overcome barriers, district leadership teams can provide the best learning opportunities for all students.

ADVOCACY: BUILDING SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION



Advocacy is simply communicating on behalf of public education. As elected officials, board members can inform and persuade policymakers so that they understand the impact their decisions have on local school districts. They may have an opportunity to suggest effective ways to confront barriers to student achievement. Moreover, board members can advocate within their communities to build a collective will to improve student opportunities.

School board members should be outspoken advocates for student success in their districts. Invite legislators and other state officials to visit the district's schools to meet with students, educators and staff to understand how the district improves student outcomes.

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