

BOARD-SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS: CHECKING YOUR ALIGNMENT

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ALIGNMENT: WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

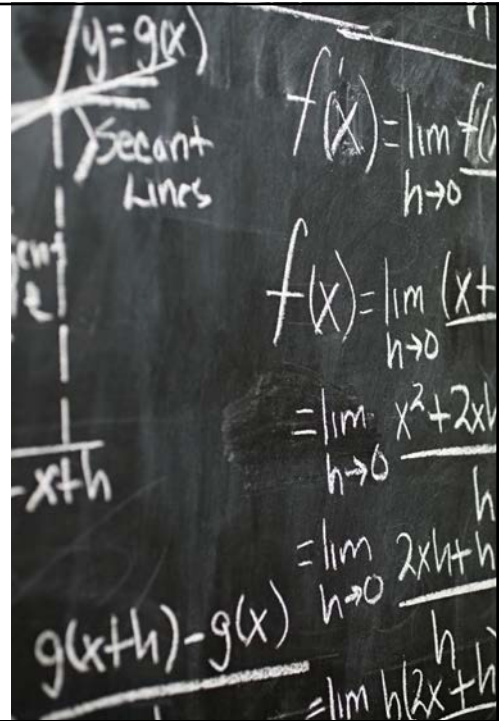
This presentation will focus on the pivotal issues surrounding the critical relationship of the district's chief executive officer and the elected board of education with a particular focus on the keys to finding and sustaining leadership alignment.

Today, we will ask you to identify the barriers to alignment that you may be experiencing in your own districts and engage in some dialogue around strategies to improve alignment in your system.

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INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

- Why Lead?
- You wanted to serve on the school board so you could run the district, right?
- If our purpose (our “why”) is in the service of positive outcomes for students, then
- How do we get there? How do we stay there?



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WHAT IS ALIGNMENT?

“Aligned” school districts have Boards and Superintendents who establish collaborative, effective relationships and governance structures designed to support the mission, vision and goals of the district.

5 Key Principles for Positive Board/Superintendent Relations

1. Clarified roles and expectations for board members and the Superintendent.
2. Establish and implement a clear process for communication.
3. Actively work to build trust and mutual respect.
4. Evaluate the whole team.
5. Actively work on improved decision-making.



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KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE IMPACT OF ALIGNMENT

Hanover Research released key findings from their 2014 comprehensive literature review to support Board-Superintendent alignment:

1. A strong, effective relationship hinges on clear definitions of duties and responsibilities.
2. Successful collaboration requires frequent, diplomatic communication both in and out of official settings.
3. A lack of new board member orientation and on-boarding leads to confusion and misunderstanding of the superintendent's administrative role.
4. Urban districts experience similar challenges as most districts but reform efforts intensify the need for leadership alignment.
5. Politics at the Board and Superintendent level plague all school districts.

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DOES IT MATTER?

Across the available research on school board governance, an overall theme emerges:

A SCHOOL BOARD'S ACTIONS AND LEVEL OF SUCCESS IN GOVERNING THE DISTRICT IMPACT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT!

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TOP ALIGNMENT BARRIERS

- * CONFIDENTIALITY BREACHES
- * NOT FOLLOWING THE CHAIN OF COMMAND
- * LACK OF CLEAR PROCESSES IN THE DISTRICT
- * RIGIDITY (“WE’VE ALWAYS DONE IT THIS WAY”)
- * SHARING CONCERNS ON SOCIAL MEDIA
- * POOR OR SELECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS
- * NO RESPECT FOR DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS
- * SINGLE ISSUE FOCUS
- * “REACTIVE” DECISION-MAKING
- * SPECIAL INTERESTS
- * POLICY VIOLATIONS
- * NO ONBOARDING FOR NEW MEMBERS
- * TRUST ISSUES
- * EXCLUDING/IGNORING THOSE WITH WHOM WE DISAGREE
- * LACK OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSPARENCY
- * MICROMANAGEMENT

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LET'S START OUR ASSESSMENT NOW!

- Please use your device to access **Menti.com**
- Enter this access code (XXXX) to take the two-question assessment.
- Results are confidential.
- Let's see our results!

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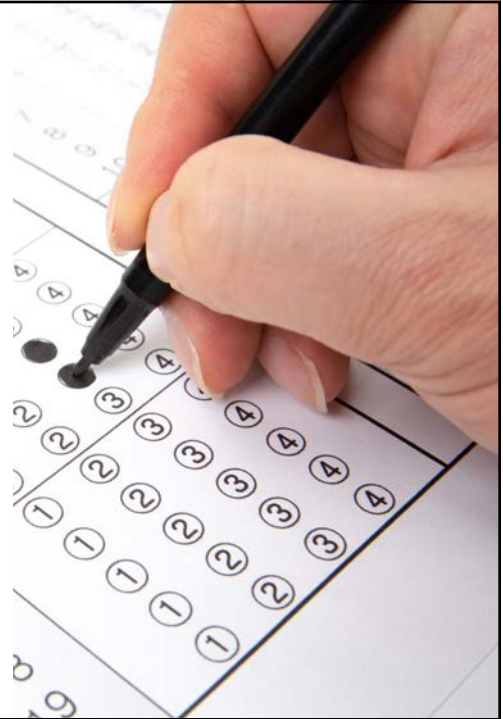
RATE YOUR ALIGNMENT

Rate the alignment of your Board and Superintendent on the 5-point scale.

1 = little to no alignment

5 = strong alignment

Participants will rate alignment in Menti for immediate response ratings.



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HOW ARE WE DOING?



Share Results from Menti Assessment.



We will use results to engage participants in dialogue around the top three barriers identified.



We will use the five indicators of alignments as our framework for review.

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CLARIFY ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Legal

- The superintendent is the “executive officer” of the board and though that term is not specifically defined in law, the intent of the statutory framework imposes upon them the duty to administer the schools in conformity with the law, department of education regulations, and reasonable board policy and guidelines.
- As it relates to employment issues – nomination for new hires, renewal, non-renewal, transfer and assignment, the filing of teacher licenses, recommending a reduction in force, etc., courts have held that these responsibilities may not be overridden or usurped by the board of education.
- With regard to students, the assignment of students to schools within the district, the drawing of attendance zones and expulsion are examples of specific authority granted solely to the superintendent.

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CLARIFIED ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Policy

Most Ohio districts have adopted policy that outlines the Board’s major responsibilities:

- To select and employ a Superintendent of Schools;
- To select and employ a Treasurer;
- To determine and pass upon the annual budget and appropriation;
- To provide needed school facilities;
- To provide by the exercise of its taxing power the funds necessary to finance the operation of the schools;
- To consider and pass upon or reject the recommendations of the Superintendent in all matters of policy; appointment or dismissal of employees, salary schedules or other personnel policies, courses of study, selection of textbooks or other matters pertaining to the welfare of the schools;

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CLARIFIED ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Policy (continued)

- To require reports of the Superintendent concerning the conditions, efficiency and needs of the schools;
- To evaluate the effectiveness with which the schools are achieving the educational purposes of the Board of Education;
- To inform the public about the progress and needs of the schools and to solicit and weigh public opinion as it affects the schools; and
- To adopt policies for its governance and the governance of its employees and the students of the schools.

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CLARIFY ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Strategy

- Use authorizing documents to guide a discussion of board member roles. Board members clarify expectations among themselves. Document these expectations as commitment.
- Communicate these expectations to the Superintendent and modify to accommodate Superintendent input.
- Board Members and Superintendent discuss what they expect of each other at least once a year and keep a record.
- Create annual agreed upon priorities for the "Team."

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ROLES & EXPECTATIONS (CONTINUED)

Strategy

- Create a schedule for one on one or small group meetings with the Superintendent.
- Do not encroach on administrative areas; call your Superintendent when in doubt.
- Follow your District procedure for handling complaints/grievances.
- Follow policy/procedure for visiting schools. If possible, schedule school visits with your Superintendent.
- Avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety. When in doubt, ask your Board President or the Superintendent; Board counsel may need to be engaged.
- Take no private action that will compromise the school system, board or administration.

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ESTABLISHED & IMPLEMENTED CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

Legal

- Not much to add here, since the statutes are silent on this piece
- In terms of its legislative and judicial functions, the Board only “communicates” through the minutes reflecting actions taken in open public session
- As such, we need to look at duly adopted Board policies to better understand the legal component of a district’s communication process

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ESTABLISHED & IMPLEMENTED CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

Policy

- School Board Member authority to speak for the Board – only when authorized by the Board
- OSBA Code of Ethics
- NSBA Code of Conduct
- Board – Staff Communications
- Public Expressions of Board Members
- Public Participation at School Board Meetings

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ESTABLISHED & IMPLEMENTED CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

Strategy

- Utilize Board workshop or retreat time to come to consensus with Superintendent on how he/she will communicate with the Board (group texts, phone calls, what arises to the level of urgent, how to stay ahead of social media).
- Superintendent shares calendar with Board so they best understand schedule and best times for conversations, questions, etc.
- Create opportunities for relationship building that overlap with district events (visit schools together, attend conferences together, travel together for drive discussions, sit together at extracurricular events).

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CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

Strategy (continued)

- Schedule clearly defined intervals to check on communications. Quarterly and not only at the annual evaluation.
- Keep lines of communication open and honest. Remember, "Clear is Kind."
- Avoid surprises at public meetings. Prepare your Superintendent. Even if you do not agree! (Remember, alignment does not mean always being in agreement).
- Keep Executive Session deliberations confidential.
- Carefully monitor use of social media during public meetings AND executive session. Follow Board expectations and agreements. (What are yours?)
- Avoid circumventing the administration when communicating with staff.

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ACTIVELY WORK TO BUILD TRUST & MUTUAL RESPECT

Legal

- These – Trust and Respect – simply cannot be legislated.
- Once elected, the removal of a sitting Board Member is relegated to a complex legal process and will only be ordered by a court when there is clear and convincing evidence of a “substantial departure from the faithful performance of duty.”
- Consequently, not being trusted, trustworthy, respected or respectful is not a legal issue

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ACTIVELY WORK TO BUILD TRUST & MUTUAL RESPECT

Policy

- OSBA Code of Ethics
- NSBA Code of Conduct
- New School Board Member Orientation
- Board Officers
- Conferences, Conventions and Workshops
- Conflict of Interest
- Oath of Office

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ACTIVELY WORK TO BUILD TRUST & MUTUAL RESPECT

Strategy

- Leave personal matters out of school business.
- Communicate equitably with all Board Members and the Superintendent.
- Superintendent shares information with all Board Members.
- Follow communications processes to build trust and respect.
- District-led orientation and onboarding. This onboarding should happen with all board members every time there is a new member! HIT RESET. (“Spring Training”)
- Intentionally organized meeting time devoted to building team and reflecting on agreements/processes.

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TRUST AND RESPECT (CONTINUED)

Strategy (continued)

- Superintendent and Board President organize time together with Board members (office hours, quarterly meetings, retreats, committee meetings).
- Visible commitment to District vision, mission and goals through agenda structure, meeting features or reports, priorities for work sessions/retreats.
- Intentional engagement sessions with stakeholders especially on critical District priorities (bond, levy, reassignment plans, new curriculum standards).
- Listen without judgment. Seek first to understand.
- Assume good intent.

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ACTIVELY WORK ON IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING

Legal

- For employment issues – nomination for initial hires, renewal, non-renewal, transfer and assignment, the filing of teacher licenses, recommending a reduction in force, etc., courts have held that these statutorily authorized responsibilities may not be overridden or usurped by the board of education.
- Chapter 4117 – Ohio’s Collective Bargaining Law
- The Sunshine Law(s)

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ACTIVELY WORK ON IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING

Policy

- Board Committees
- Rules of Order
- Open Meetings, Executive Session and Voting
- Use of Electronic Mail
- Policy Review and Evaluation
- OSBA Code of Ethics
- Board-Staff Communications
- Board-Superintendent Relationship

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ACTIVELY WORK ON IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING

Policy (continued)

- Board Officers
- Public Complaints About School Personnel
- Public Complaints About Curriculum/Instructional Materials
- Community Involvement in Decision Making
- Business Advisory Council
- Parent/District Support Organizations
- Partnerships with Business
- Relations with Special Interest Groups

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ACTIVELY WORK ON IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING

Strategy

- Determine a decision-making process as a part of Roles and Expectations.
- Learn and practice the art of compromise.
- Listen objectively to constructive criticism.
- Be willing to make tough decisions.
- Every aspect of the school system should have a clearly defined process/system.
- Establish a continuous improvement loop/monitoring process to determine lacking or ineffective systems.

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IMPROVED DECISION MAKING (CONTINUED)

Strategy (continued)

- Ensure leadership development is focused on systems development (Leadership, Customers, Planning, Workforce, Operations, Information Management).
- Developing systems is the work of the administration.
- Ensuring effective systems are in place and monitoring their progress is the work of the Board and Superintendent.

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EVALUATE THE WHOLE TEAM

Legal

- There is no legal mechanism addressing the evaluation of a school board or school board member.
- As for Superintendents, R.C. Section 3319.01 provides:
 - Each board shall adopt procedures for the evaluation of its superintendent and shall evaluate its superintendent in accordance with those procedures.
 - An evaluation based upon such procedures shall be considered by the board in deciding whether to renew the superintendent's contract. The establishment of an evaluation procedure shall not create an expectancy of continued employment.
 - ***Nothing in this section shall prevent a board from making the final determination regarding the renewal or failure to renew of a superintendent's contract.***

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EVALUATE THE WHOLE TEAM

Policy

- Assessment of District Goals
- Evaluation of the Superintendent
- Evaluation of the Treasurer
- Evaluation of Principals (OPES) and Other Administrators
- Evaluation of Teachers (OTES)
- Evaluation of School Counselors (OSCES)
- Evaluation of Classified Staff

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EVALUATE THE WHOLE TEAM

Strategy

- Effectively aligned Boards and Superintendents evaluate their entire team.
- 360 surveys collect data on this leadership team.
- Evaluation instruments are designed to be instructive of district goals and priorities and "owned" by Board and Superintendent.
- Collective ownership creates trust, respect and collective impact.

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ALIGNMENT: ACCIDENT OR INTENTIONAL?



WSFCS to Move Students Out of Potentially Contaminated Schools

BY MEG SMITH | WINSTON-SALEM
PUBLISHED 4:19 PM ET FEB. 11, 2015



WINSTON-SALEM — The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools System is now moving forward with plans to

The halls at Konnoak Elementary have exposed pipes. Money for a partial replacement of the aging school is included in the bond proposal.
Lauren Carroll/Journal

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AFTER THE ALIGNMENT CHECK: WHAT'S NEXT?

- **Find the time to address these important issues**
- **Make meaningful Board development a part of work sessions and retreats– rinse and repeat!**
- **Get to consensus on key alignment issues: lanes, communication, chain of command, disagreement, public expressions, and respecting the minority view(s)**
- **Develop a hard-wired process for any and all transitions in your District leadership team: “Spring Training”**
- **Onboard leaders effectively – whenever there is a change in the “organism”**

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AFTER THE ALIGNMENT CHECK: WHAT'S NEXT?

- **Build a culture that both retains and grows strong leaders**
- **Community engagement – when aligned, this is where it happens best**
- **Fight for your ideas – but fight fair: your views will not always carry the day, but it does not mean you have to discard those beliefs. Today’s policies of the “loyal opposition” often become the policies of tomorrow.**
- **How will you govern?**

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INTENTIONAL ALIGNMENT!



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT & SERVICE

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