

# A Clearly Defined PURPOSE

is fundamental  
to success

The performance evaluation by the board is particularly important to superintendents. It is not only significant on a personal level; it is considered a key indication of the strength of the members' collective support. In most cases, superintendents believe that the result will be very positive if the board wants the superintendent to continue and it will be deliberately disappointing if they feel otherwise. That said, many board members feel compelled to point out areas for improvement, so great caution should be taken to distinguish between dutiful and dissatisfied.

Theoretically the superintendent's performance evaluation should be a meaningful document articulating the board members' combined assessment of his or her effectiveness. In reality, it is too often the product of a muddled process whereby politicians with a variety of personal and political agendas, expertise in the matter, and values struggled to compile a document the majority of them could support.

Many a superintendent has anticipated appreciation for long hours and total dedication resulting in a list of amazing achievements, only

to be crushed when presented with a few vague commendations and an equal number of minor, unsubstantiated complaints.

This does not have to be. The performance evaluation can be a positive and valuable experience for everyone, including the superintendent, with careful forethought and planning.

Ideally the board establishes the purpose of the evaluation at the beginning of the year by defining what will be measured, how it will be measured, and how the findings will be used and it conducts the performance assessment at the end of the year. This strategy positions the superintendent to successfully meet the board's expectations and avoids adjustments and shifts over time. The superintendent can focus efforts on what matters to the board throughout the year and be poised to deliver evidence of success at the end.

In the unfortunate event performance standards were not established early in the year, it is still important to identify the evaluation parameters for everyone involved before it takes place.

## THE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PURPOSE

**EXPECTATIONS** Is the board going to assess management skills, leadership expertise, achieving duties listed in the job description, accomplishing the year's goals, popularity among stakeholders, some combination of these or . . . ?

**ASSESSMENT** How will the board determine results? Will it involve student data, surveys, rating achievement of goals, average of board member ratings, or . . . ?

**FINDINGS** Will the results be used to determine, focus areas, the superintendent's compensation, next year's objectives, contract renewal, performance pay or . . . ?