Characteristics of Highly Effective Boards

For the following school board Elements of Success, indicate the level of performance reached by your board. [Note: You can also use this as a self-assessment of your performance in each of these categories] Identify the level of performance in one of four categories: Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, or Distinguished.

Vision-Directed Planning. Boards engage communities and staff in the development of a shared vision of student learning focused on student learning. The vision is the foundation of the mission and goals that direct board policy-making, planning, resource allocation and activities.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. The board collaborates with the community to articulate core values and beliefs for the district.

____2. Board members can clearly articulate the vision and goals of the district.

____3. The board has developed a long-range plan for improving student learning.

____4. The board regularly monitors the progress of goals to improve student learning.

____5. The board adopts a budget and appropriates resources aligned to the vision and goals.

____6. The board establishes a culture of high expectations for all students.

Community Engagement. All members of the community are stakeholders in the success of their schools. Community engagement is a reciprocal advocacy process that creates and sustains meaningful conversations, systems connections, and feedback loops with all groups in the community. Successful community engagement results in collaborative partnerships and new types and levels of community participation in schools.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. The board promotes practices that solicit input and involvement from all segments of the community.

____2. The board collaboratively develops vision and goals with staff, parents, students and the broader community.

____3. The board recognizes and celebrates the contributions of school community members to school improvement efforts.

____4. The board is responsive and respectful to community inquiry and feedback.

____5. The board advocates for public policy that supports education through relationships with community leaders, city and county government officials and state legislators.

Effective Leadership. Board leadership is proactive, integrated, and distributed. Boards establish focus, direction, and expectations that foster student learning. Across education systems, boards develop and implement collaborative leadership models and practices that are guided by shared student learning goals. Within organizations, boards align authority and responsibility so that decisions can be made at levels close to implementation.

Indicators for this element are:

_____1. Board members are visible in the community.

_____2. Board members develop relationships to improve student learning and opportunities for students.

_____3. Board activities, analysis and decision-making are aligned to vision and goals.

_____4. The board engages staff in decision-making processes.

_____5. Board members establish and sustain relationships with community leaders, city and county government officials, and state legislators.

_____6. Board members model an empowering leadership style.

_____7. The board enacts policies to define hiring practices that select employees who fit into the culture and core values of the district.

_____8. Board members promote change through dialogue and collaboration.

_____9. Board members have a vision of what the district/schools can be that is greater than what is.

_____10. The board sets policies that incorporate thoughtful long-term leadership succession plans for all levels of leadership in the district.

_____11. Board members understand and are knowledgeable about school improvement initiatives and their role in supporting those initiatives.

Accountability. Boards have high expectations for the learning of all students and hold themselves and their organizations accountable for reaching those results. Boards align policy, resource allocation, staffing, curriculum, professional development,

and other activities with the vision and goals for student learning. The accountability process includes recognition of successes and support where improvement is needed.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. The board ensures funding to implement accountability measures.

____2. The board regularly conducts a self-evaluation to monitor its performance.

____3. The board models a culture of high expectations throughout the district.

____4. The board's priority and focus are on curriculum, student learning, and student success.

____5. The board appropriates resources based on student learning priorities.

____6. The board supports reward, consequence, and recognition systems to encourage high levels of staff and student learning.

____7. Individual student results are measured against expectations set by district standards.

____8. The board regularly conducts a superintendent evaluation to monitor progress on goals and student learning.

____9. The board establishes performance goals for senior staff and itself.

____10. The board and all stakeholders clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in creating and supporting a culture of high expectations throughout the system.

Using Data for Continuous Improvement. Continuous improvement is the antithesis of complacency. Boards use data and information, from multiple sources and in various formats, to identify areas for improvement, set priorities, and monitor improvement efforts. At the same time, they seek even better ways to do things the organization is already doing well.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. Board members use, and expect staff to use, a variety of types of relevant data in decision-making.

____2. Programs approved by the board have effective data collection requirements and measurable results.

____3. The board uses data to identify discrepancies between current and desired outcomes.

____4. The board identifies and addresses priority needs based on data analysis and often uses comparison to other similar districts.

____5. The board communicates to the public how policy decisions are linked to student learning data.

____6. The board creates a culture that encourages the use of data to identify needs throughout the system.

Cultural Responsiveness. The cultural diversity of a community has many facets – social, economic, political, religious, geographical, generational, linguistic, ethnic, racial, and gender. Boards develop an understanding of this diversity and hold

perspectives that reflect the cultures in their community. Effective community engagement and expectancy strategies build on the strengths of a community's cultural diversity.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. Board outreach and community engagement activities accommodate cultural differences in values and communication.

____2. The board actively encourages and expects the superintendent to facilitate the participation of culturally diverse groups.

____3. The board has a process to review policies for cultural, racial and ethnic bias.

____4. Board members approach decision-making from multiple perspectives.

____5. District staff is representative of the community.

____6. A climate of caring, respect, and the valuing of students' cultures is established through board policy and goals.

____7. The board holds staff accountable for high standards and expectations for all students.

Climate. Boards create a climate of expectations that all students can learn at high levels. Board policy-making and activities foster a positive and safe learning climate that supports the vision for student learning. The board models professional relationships and a culture of mutual respect.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. The board models relationships built on trust and respect.

____2. Board members take time to reflect and improve internal and external relationships.

____3. The board regularly assesses the district climate.

____4. The board creates a system in which high levels of student learning are expected.

____5. The board establishes policies and ensures practices to foster a safe, positive learning climate for students.

Learning Organizations. A learning organization is a self-renewing professional community that supports reflection, discovery, learning, improvement, and success by staff at all levels. Boards encourage professional development that empowers

staff and nurtures leadership capabilities across the organization.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. Board policies nurture leadership capabilities across the organization.

____2. The board creates and pursues opportunities to learn about research-based strategies to address identified problems.

____3. The board understands that problem-solving involves risk-taking.

____4. Board members promote change through dialogue and collaboration.

____5. The board encourages professional development that empowers staff.

____6. The board fosters an environment of mutual cooperation, emotional support and personal growth throughout the organization.

Systems Thinking. Systems thinking allows boards to break out of the box of single district thinking and act on an integrated view of education within and across systems and levels (e.g. K-12, ESD, community college, and university). Boards that practice systems thinking open the door for collaborative local, state, and national partnerships, coordinated programs, and shared resource models to improve student learning.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. The board and leadership team work to avoid shifting problems from one part of the system to another.

____2. The board encourages an organizational structure which enables creative processes.

____3. The board and leadership team engage in process thinking, seeing beyond the immediate situation and easy solutions.

____4. The board and leadership team analyze issues for their impact on other parts of the system.

____5. The board and leadership team take responsibility for solving problems and avoiding blame as a solution.

____6. The board shares information with board members from other education systems and levels.

Innovation and Creativity. Innovation and creativity are assets to the process of development and change, leading to new types of thinking and better ways of meeting student needs. Innovation and creativity are not predictable, but can flourish when

boards align vision throughout the organization, engage in collaborative partnerships, and encourage dialogue, new ideas, and differing perspectives.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. Board members create time and opportunities for their own creative thinking.

____2. Board members partner with community and educational organizations to remove real and perceived barriers to creativity and innovation.

____3. The board sets meeting agendas that allow it to proactively identify and explore strategic issues.

____4. The board incorporates flexibility into its future plans to enable the district to look and move in unforeseen directions in response to unexpected events.

____5. The board sets policies creating informed and aware employees at all levels in order to seize the opportunities presented by unexpected events.

____6. The board recognizes the risk inherent in creativity and innovation and promotes employee knowledge, awareness, creativity, self-initiated action and experimentation.

____7. The board supports creative and innovative practices at all levels of leadership

Board Member Conduct, Ethics and Relationship with Superintendent. The relationship between the board and the superintendent is a delicate one and it is essential that they have a clear, mutual understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities. Team building is an essential part of this relationship and a clear district goal will help maintain a respectful relationship.

The Indicators for this Standard are:

____1. Each member of the board understands and respects the distinction between the board's responsibilities and the superintendent's duties.

____2. The board and superintendent trust and respect one another.

____3. Board members represent the interests of the entire district.

____4. Board members preserve the confidentiality of items discussed in executive session.

____5. Board members do not use their office for personal gain or advancement.

____6. Board members do not attempt to individually speak on behalf of the entire board or commit the board.

____7. Board members direct complaints and requests to the superintendent rather than attempting to solve them directly.

____8. The board and superintendent agree on the information needed by the board, and when and how the board receives that information.

____9. The board and superintendent participate in learning opportunities as a team.

___10. Board members come to the meeting familiar with the agenda and prepared to discuss, ask questions, and take action on agenda items.

Budgeting and Financial Accountability. One of the important activities in translating the educational goals of schools into reality is the adoption of a budget and making sure that the school district is fiscally sound. Boards utilize fiscal resources based on student needs and district policy and goals.

Indicators for this element are:

____1. Board members are knowledgeable of the district budgeting process.

____2. Budgeting decisions are based on student needs, adopted district policy and goals, and the districts financial ability to meet those needs.

____3. Board members have a basic understanding of district revenues and expenses.

____4. The board reviews monthly financial statements provided by the superintendent and understand their role in the oversight of the budget.