Governing Differently: Lessons from Districts with High Student Achievement

Southern Region Leadership Conference
Hot Springs, Arkansas
July 17, 2017

by
Ivan Lorentzen
Governing Differently
Lessons from Districts with High Student Achievement

Ivan J. Lorentzen, Ed.D.

- School Board Member – 20 years
- Retired Professor of Psychology
  Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell, MT
Edited by
  Thomas L. Alsbury
  Phil Gore
Foreword by
  Willard R. Daggett

Chapter 4:

*How Board Governance Practices Affect Student Achievement*

Lorentzen and McCaw

Harvard Education Press
Cambridge, MA (2015)
Texas Lone Star

A Publication of
Texas Association of School Boards

A four-part series of articles
1. Why Boardsmanship Matters
2. The Science of Student Achievement
3. Failure to Govern
4. Staying the Course

April, May, June, July 2017
Where We Are Going Today . . .

- Boards and Student Achievement
- Montana and Washington Studies
- Roles and Relationships
- The Board Standards
- Theory and Practice
- Let’s Get Specific- Accomplishing the Board’s Duties
- The Learning District: A Team Approach
Five Guiding Questions

How does the Board . . .

- ensure that the district is accountable for student success?
- assure high expectations for student learning?
- demonstrate responsible school district governance?
- engage the local community?
- create conditions for student and staff success?
The Accountability Movement

- The public demands and deserves accountability

- Accountability is not unique to schools...
  - Business
  - Manufacturing
  - Public Sector
  - Education
Role(s) of the School Board: Is there a Priority?

1. Board member roles and responsibilities
2. Board and superintendent relations
3. Leadership skills
4. Legal issues in education
5. Board accountability
6. Communication
7. Budget/resources allocations
8. Student achievement issues

Hess-2002-board members ranked student achievement eighth issue of concern
Role(s) of the School Board: Is there a Priority?

1. Budget/funding
2. Improving student learning across the board
3. Closing the achievement gaps among subgroups
4. Quality of teaching
5. Quality of leadership
6. Community engagement/involvement
7. Discipline or school safety
8. Improving non-academic learning in areas such as the arts, service learning, civic engagement

Hess & Meeks-2010-board members ranked student achievement second issue of concern
Chronology of Applicable Research Informing Effective Boardsmanship

1970

Marzana, Waters, & McNulty (2003- present)

Delagardelle & Heiligenthal (1998-2008)
*The Lighthouse Inquires*

1980

Lorentzen & McCaw (2015)
*How Board governance Practices Affect Student Achievement in Improving School Board Effectiveness*

1990

Delagardelle & Heiligenthal (1998-2008)
*The Lighthouse Inquires*

1990

Delagardelle & Heiligenthal (1998-2008)
*The Lighthouse Inquires*

2000

The Future of School Board Governance: Relevancy and Revelation

2010

Alsbury & Gore (eds.) (2015)
*Improving School Board Effectiveness*

2020
The Montana Study (Lorentzen, 2013)

to determine whether actions by this group (the school board)...

...has any effect on the achievement of this group (students).
Expanding the Montana Study

Initial Findings and Continued Inquiry

- Expanded to Montana 4th and 8th Graders
- Extended to Washington State: Grades 4, 8, and 10

Consistent Findings
You Can’t Do It Alone
Think of your current or ideal formal organizational structure for a public school district to include the stakeholders (community, school board, superintendent, principal, teachers, and students).
Formal Organizational Structure Examples

- School Board
- Community
- Superintendent
- Principal
- Teacher
- Student and Parents

Diagram:
- Community
- Superintendent
- Principals
- Teachers
- Students & Parents
- School Board
Formal Organizational Structure Examples

Diagram:
- School Board
  - Superintendent
  - Community
  - Principal
  - Teachers
  - Students and Parents
- School Board
  - Superintendent
  - Principals
  - Teachers
  - Students and Parents
  - Community
Roles and Responsibilities

Community
School Board
Superintendent
Principal
Teacher
Student

Engagement
Governance
District Leadership
School Leadership
Instruction
Achievement
Schools Function Best With Separate but Overlapping Formal Roles

- Community Engagement
- Board Governance
- Superintendent District Leadership
- Principal School Leadership
- Teacher Instruction
- Student Achievement
Schools Function Best With Separate but Overlapping Formal Roles

- Community Engagement
- Board Governance
- Superintendent District Leadership
- Principal School Leadership
- Teacher Instruction
- Student Achievement
Effective Boardsmanship: Collaboration

- Community Engagement
- Board Governance
- Superintendent District Leadership
Effective Boardsmanship

Community Engagement

Board Governance

Board and Community Collaboration

Board and Superintendent Collaboration

Superintendent District Leadership

Only the Board
Formal Relationships of Boards

- Community
- Boards
- Superintendents

- Disconnected
- Domated By
- Elitist
- Effective
Formal Relationships of Boards to Community

- Community
- Boards

Disconnected

Dominated By

Special Interest Group Influence

Elitist

Boards Know Best

Effective
# Community/Board Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Continued Effective Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnected, Disarray</td>
<td>Board Plan, Community Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominated/Special Interests Single Issue Board Members</td>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elitist Board</td>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Public Participation Spectrum** *(Illinois Association of School Boards, 2015)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>INFORM</th>
<th>CONSULT</th>
<th>INVOLVE</th>
<th>COLLABORATE (Engagement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OBJECTIVE</strong></td>
<td>Provide the public with information</td>
<td>Obtain public feedback</td>
<td>Work directly with the public throughout the process</td>
<td>Partner with the public in decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC</strong></td>
<td>We will keep you informed</td>
<td>Provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</td>
<td>Ensure public concerns &amp; issues are reflected in the alternatives</td>
<td>Incorporate public advice and recommendations into the decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE TOOLS:</strong></td>
<td>Fact sheets, Websites, Open houses</td>
<td>Public comment, Focus groups, Surveys, Public meetings</td>
<td>Workshops, Deliberative polling</td>
<td>Citizen advisory committees, Synergy-building Participatory decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Formal Relationships of Boards to Superintendent

- Disconnected
- Dominated By
- Elitist
- Effective

Deference to Superintendent
Micromanaging
Board/Superintendent Interactions

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<td>Disconnected, Disarray</td>
<td>Board Plan, Super. Job Description</td>
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<td>Micromanagement</td>
<td>Governance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deference to Admin.</td>
<td>Board Plan, Board Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominated</td>
<td></td>
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Disconnected, Disarray
- Micromanagement
- Elitist Board Members
- Deference to Admin. Dominated

Continued Effective Dialogue
- Board Plan, Super. Job Description
- Governance Committee
- Board Plan, Board Engagement
Effective Boardsmanship

- Community Engagement
- Board Governance
- Superintendent Leadership
Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS) (WSSDA, 2009)

The Five Board Standards

**Standard 1:** Responsible school district governance

**Standard 2:** High student expectations

**Standard 3:** Create conditions district-wide for student and staff success

**Standard 4:** Holding the district accountable

**Standard 5:** Community engagement
The Five Board Standards

Order by importance as related to student achievement

Standard 1: Responsible school district governance

Standard 2: High student expectations

Standard 3: Create conditions district-wide for student and staff success

Standard 4: Holding the district accountable

Standard 5: Community engagement
Board Self-Assessment Survey (BSAS) (WSSDA, 2009)

The Five Board Standards

Order by importance as related to student achievement

Standard 1: Responsible school district governance

Standard 2: High student expectations

Standard 3: Create conditions district-wide for student and staff success

Standard 4: Holding the district accountable

Standard 5: Community engagement
The Prioritized Board Standards
(WSSDA, 2009; Lorentzen, 2013)

Priority #1. Holding the District Accountable
Priority #2. High Student Expectations
Priority #3. Responsible School District Governance
Priority #4. Engage the Local Community
Priority #5. Create Conditions District-Wide Student & Staff Success
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Montana</th>
<th>Washington</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 4</td>
<td>Hold the district accountable</td>
<td>Hold the district accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 2</td>
<td>High student expectations</td>
<td>Responsible school governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1</td>
<td>Responsible school governance</td>
<td>High student expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 5</td>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td>Create conditions for student and staff success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard 3</td>
<td>Create conditions for student and staff success</td>
<td>Community engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Board Actions Matter

Negative

Positive
Board Actions Matter

Negative  Positive
Low-Achieving Districts and Low-Performing Boards

(Lee & Eadens, 2014, p. 9)

Low-performing district’s board meetings:

1. Less orderly
2. Less time spend on student achievement
3. Not listening respectfully and attentively to the person speaking
4. Members advancing their own agenda
5. Less good working relationships with the governance team
6. Fewer members relied on the superintendent for advice/input
7. Member, other that the chair, taking excessive meeting time
8. Less focus on policy items
The Prioritized Board Standards
(WSSDA, 2009; Lorentzen, 2013)

Priority #1. Holding the District Accountable
Priority #2. High Student Expectations
Priority #3. Responsible School District Governance
Priority #4. Engage the Local Community
Priority #5. Create Conditions District-Wide Student & Staff Success
Structural Scheme

BSAS

- Standards
  - Benchmarks
  - Key Indicators
School Board Actions Matter
First Priority - Standard 4: Holding the District Accountable

The board has a duty to:

Hold teachers and administrators accountable for student success

- Evaluate the superintendent on clear and focused expectations.
- Commit to continuous improvement in student learning expectations.
1. Holding the District Accountable  
(Both are vital but which comes first?)

How should the board hold the district accountable?  
First, the board should . . . ?

A. Commit to continuous improvement in student achievement at each school and throughout the district  
   OR

B. Evaluate the superintendent on clear and focused expectations
1. Holding the District Accountable

How should the board hold the district accountable?
First, the board should . . . ?

A. Commit to continuous improvement in student achievement at each school and throughout the district

OR

B. Evaluate the superintendent on clear and focused expectations
1. Holding the District Accountable

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

B. Evaluate the superintendent on clear and focused expectations

• Have written goals for the superintendent that focus on specific outcomes for student learning

• Communicate performance expectations for the superintendent to our community

• Base decisions about the superintendents contract on objective evaluation of his or her performance and achievement goals
1. Holding the District Accountable

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

A. Commit to continuous improvement in student achievement at each school and throughout the district
   
   • Follows a schedule for the timely review of the district plan
   
   • Ensures a high degree of coherence between the district plan and school improvement plans
   
   • Annually reviews and makes recommendations to the district plan and school improvement plans
School Board Actions Matter
Second Priority - Standard 2: High Student Expectations

The board has a duty to:
Set high expectations for student learning

Set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals/plans for meeting them by adopting a collaboratively developed district plan focused on learning and achievement outcomes for all students.
2. High Student Expectations

How should the board set and communicate high expectations for student learning with clear goals and plans for meeting those expectations? Does one . . .
2. High Student Expectations
(Choose two)

A. Articulate the conviction that all students can learn and the belief that student learning can improve regardless of existing circumstances or resources

B. Lead in the development, articulation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by schools and community

C. Adopt a collaboratively developed district plan focused on learning and achievement outcomes for all students

D. Ensure non-negotiable goals for student achievement are established and align with the district plan
2. High Student Expectations  
(Choose two)

A. Articulate the conviction that all students can learn and the belief that student learning can improve regardless of existing circumstances or resources

B. Lead in the development, articulation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by schools and community

C. Adopt a collaboratively developed district plan focused on learning and achievement outcomes for all students

D. Ensure non-negotiable goals for student achievement are established and align with the district plan
2. High Student Expectations

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

C. Adopt a collaboratively developed **district plan** focused on learning and achievement outcomes for all students

• Through policies and actions, communicates high expectations for all students
2. High Student Expectations

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

D. Ensure non-negotiable goals for student achievement are established and align with the district plan

- In collaboration with staff and community, formulate and maintain a district plan with goals and outcomes
- Base its ongoing work, such as policy development, decision-making, and budgeting, on the district plan
- Continually monitor progress toward the goals and outcomes of the district plan
Third Priority - Standard 1: Provide Responsible School District Governance

The board has a duty to:

Provide responsible school district governance

- conducting board and district business in a fair, respectful, and responsible manner.

- working as an effective and collaborative team.
3. Provide Responsible School District Governance

(Select the one that is **NOT** significant)

A. Conduct board and district business in a fair, respectful and responsible manner

B. Ensure the board is accountable and open to the public including seeking divergent perspectives in its decision making process

C. Respect and advocate mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of board members and the superintendents

D. Adopt policies based on well-researched practices that emphasize a belief that all students can achieve at high levels and that support continuous improvement of student outcomes

E. Promote healthy relationships by communicating supportively, inspiring, motivating and empowering others, and exercising influence in a positive manner

F. Work as an effective and collaborative team
3. Provide Responsible School District Governance

(Select the one that IS NOT significant)

A. Conduct board and district business in a fair, respectful and responsible manner
B. Ensure the board is accountable and open to the public including seeking divergent perspectives in its decision making process
C. Respect and advocate mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of board members and the superintendents
D. Adopt policies based on well-researched practices that emphasize a belief that all students can achieve at high levels and that support continuous improvement of student outcomes
E. Promote healthy relationships by communicating supportively, inspiring, motivating and empowering others, and exercising influence in a positive manner
F. Work as an effective and collaborative team
3. Provide Responsible School District Governance

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

A. Conduct board and district business in a fair, respectful and responsible manner

  • Commit to a clear and shared purpose

  • Set goals for its improvement
3. Provide Responsible School District Governance

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

B. Ensure the board is accountable and open to the public including seeking divergent perspectives in its decision making process

• Use written protocols for its interactions
3. Provide Responsible School District Governance

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

C. Respect and advocate mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of board members and the superintendents

• Work with the superintendent to achieve mutual trust and commitment
3. Provide Responsible School District Governance

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

D. Adopt policies based on well-researched practices that emphasize a belief that all students can achieve at high levels and that support continuous improvement of student outcomes

• Focus policy decisions on what is necessary for all students to achieve at high levels
3. Provide Responsible School District Governance

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

F. Work as an effective and collaborative team

- Pursue professional development to improve board members’ knowledge and skills by attending conferences, holding study sessions, etc.
- Use collaborative processes that result in well-informed problem-solving and decision making
The board has a duty to:

Engage the local community

Engage the community and represent the values and expectations they hold for their schools, by soliciting input from staff and a wide spectrum of the community so that diverse interests and perspectives are considered.
4. Engage the Local Community
(Choose two)

A. Collaborate with families and community members responding to diverse interests and needs, and mobilize community resources

B. Ensure school board and district transparency, through a process that is open and accountable

C. Ensure district information and decisions are communicated community-wide

D. Solicit input from staff and a wide spectrum of the community so that a diverse range of interests and perspectives on issues is considered
4. Engage the Local Community (Choose two)

A. Collaborate with families and community members responding to diverse interests and needs, and mobilize community resources

B. Ensure school board and district transparency, through a process that is open and accountable

C. Ensure district information and decisions are communicated community-wide

D. Solicit input from staff and a wide spectrum of the community so that a diverse range of interests and perspectives on issues is considered
4. Engage the Local Community

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

B. Ensure school board and district transparency, through a process that is open and accountable

• Conduct business in a transparent and accountable manner
4. Engage the Local Community

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

D. Solicit input from staff and a wide spectrum of the community so that a diverse range of interests and perspectives on issues is considered

• Seek community and staff input in its decision-making to gain community and staff support

• Carefully consider community and staff input in its decision-making
School Board Actions Matter
Fifth Priority - Standard 3: Create Conditions District-wide for Student and Staff Success

The board has a duty to:

Create conditions district-wide for student success

Provide for learning essentials, including rigorous curriculum, technology, and good facilities.
5. Create Conditions District-Wide for Student and Staff Success

(Choose three)

A. Provide for the safety and security of all students and staff

B. Employ and support quality teachers, administrators and other staff and provide for their professional development

C. Provide for learning essentials, including rigorous curriculum, technology and high quality facilities

D. Ensure management of the organization, operations, and resources for an efficient and effective learning environment

E. Adopt and monitor an annual budget that allocated resources based on the district’s goals and priorities for student learning
5. Create Conditions District-Wide for Student and Staff Success

(Choose three)

A. Provide for the safety and security of all students and staff

B. Employ and support quality teachers, administrators and other staff and provide for their professional development

C. **Provide for learning essentials, including rigorous curriculum, technology and high quality facilities**

D. **Ensure management of the organization, operations, and resources for an efficient and effective learning environment**

E. **Adopt and monitor an annual budget that allocated resources based on the district’s goals and priorities for student learning**
5. Create Conditions District-Wide for Student and Staff Success

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

C. Provide for learning essentials, including rigorous curriculum, technology and high quality facilities

• Have a process that includes community and parent involvement in selecting curriculum

• Policy requires rigorous and regular evaluation of curriculum and supplemental materials to ensure they align with state and district standards
5. Create Conditions District-Wide for Student and Staff Success

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

D. Ensure management of the organization, operations, and resources for an efficient and effective learning environment

  • Provide for evaluation of district operations to ensure there is an efficient and effective learning environment
5. Create Conditions District-Wide for Student and Staff Success

Exactly how does a board accomplish this?

E. Adopt and monitor an annual budget that allocated resources based on the district’s goals and priorities for student learning

- Seek public input during the budget process
- Regularly monitor the budget and fiscal status of the district
What to Do?

Address the prioritized Board Standards through a *district plan* including:

- A yearly calendar focusing Board attention
- A Board meeting agenda focused on appropriate roles
- Avoid specific Board behaviors associated with low student achievement
- Demonstrate specific Board behaviors associated with high student achievement
The District Plan

The district plan addresses the responsibilities of the Board to ensure that:

• the goals of the district’s strategic plan are accomplished.

• the goals of the strategic plan are supported with resources.

• the district plan is heavily focused on the expectations for high student achievement and the means to accomplish them.
## Proposed Monthly Calendar Promoting Effective Boardsmanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Governance Culture</th>
<th>Board/Supt Relations</th>
<th>Operations and Expenses</th>
<th>Student Achievement</th>
<th>Community Dialog</th>
<th>Board Development</th>
<th>Urgent and Other Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>Board Committees (1x year)</td>
<td>Job Description</td>
<td>District Budget</td>
<td>Monthly reports of student achievement data, curriculum development and approval</td>
<td>Business Roundtable</td>
<td>Parliamentary Procedure</td>
<td>Audits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>Board’s Code of Conduct</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>Understanding data</td>
<td>Annual Planning Retreat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>Review District Plan</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Retired Community</td>
<td>Community Demographic Forecasts</td>
<td>State and Federal Reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>Election of Officers</td>
<td>Authority of Sup.</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Service Clubs</td>
<td>Board Training</td>
<td>Negotiation Reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dawson & Quinn - AGI: Aspen Group International, LLC., Lafayette, CO (www.aspengroup.org)
Proposed Regular Board Meeting Agenda Promoting Effective Boardsmanship

1. Convene/Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance/Mission 0:05
2. Adopt Agenda 0:05
3.showcasing Schools/Principal’s Reports 0:15
4. Superintendent's Report 0:30
5. Board Development 0:20
6. Public Comment 0:15
7. Monitoring Board Performance 0:10
8. Superintendent’s Consent Agenda/Personnel/Financial Statements 0:05
9. Board Consent Agenda/Minutes etc. 0:05

Recess

11. Board debriefing of the Meeting 0:10

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9. Board Consent Agenda/Minutes etc. 0:05

**Superintendent’ Report**

Provide for the Board adequate information about all administrative actions and decisions that are delegated to the superintendent, but required by law to be approved by the Board.

Student Achievement for Wildflower Elementary

*Students will make reasonable progress towards one year’s academic progress... (Board Policy)*

Source: Dawson & Quinn- AGI: Aspen Group International, LLC., Lafayette, CO (www.aspengroup.org)
Conclusion

How does the Board . . .

- **ensure** that the district is accountable for student success?
- **assure** high expectations for student learning?
- **demonstrate** responsible school district governance?
- **engage** the local community?
- **create** conditions for student and staff success?
The Learning District:
A Systems Approach to High Student Achievement

The Learning District: Ineffective

Instructional Team

Boardsmanship
The District Health Index

Which direction is your District moving?
Takeaways . . .

- Board actions matter, for both good and bad
- The Board is a member of a team:
  - You can’t do it alone – need for collaboration
  - There are several teams in the educational enterprise
- It is vital for Boards to perform those duties that advantage student achievement
- Effective Boardsmanship can emerge in the evolution of a learning district
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead
Final Thoughts
and/or Questions
Governing Differently
Lessons from Districts with High Student Achievement

Thank You

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