



Washington Outcomes-Based Superintendent Evaluation

Executive Summary – Outcomes-Based Superintendent Evaluation Through a Year-Long Process

Purpose

The purpose of this superintendent evaluation process is to conduct a year-round superintendent evaluation that focuses on district performance, primarily the community's desired results for students.

Beliefs and Assumptions

This process is guided by the following beliefs and assumptions:

- School boards are not inherently qualified to prepare, develop, or mentor superintendents in the professional competencies that are the focus of superintendent preparation programs.
- School boards are qualified as laypersons to judge, on behalf of the community, whether the school district is making reasonable progress in achieving data-driven goals for student learning, and whether the district is following board guidance.
- Superintendent evaluation requires balance between the school board's need for a system of accountability and the superintendent's need for thoughtful performance feedback.
- Evaluations must be legally, ethically, and professionally defensible, incorporating a reasonable process while respecting unique contextual differences in each school district.
- Development and implementation of the evaluation process and its component elements is informed by the insights and experiences of both superintendents and board members.
- Evaluation must be feasible without placing excessive demand on time or resources.
- Performance outcomes used in the evaluation should be long-term and significant so that constancy of purpose is maintained from year to year. Goals of short duration (such as annual targets) can distract from the long-term district vision.

Principles Guiding the Process

If districts are successful, superintendents are successful. Therefore:

- *The purpose of superintendent evaluation is successful district performance.*
- *The focus of the board's attention in superintendent evaluation is the district as a whole.*

Comprehensive review of organizational performance requires considerable time. Therefore:

- *Accountability is 'on the agenda' on a recurring basis, throughout the year.*
- *Evaluation is a systematic, deliberative, and year-long (not year-end) activity.*

Answering for district performance is the board's most important duty. Therefore:

- *The superintendent accounts to the board.*
- *The board accounts to the public.*

The superintendent accounts for both ends and means. This includes:

- *Results for students (primarily student learning and student growth); and*
- *Staff work, district programs, etc. whose purpose is to achieve results for students. This includes the superintendent's individual efforts as well as those of staff.*

Superintendent evaluation ensures both transparency and confidentiality. Therefore:

- *Organizational performance is a public interest, so review of district performance is an obligation the board must fulfill in public.*
- *Review of staff performance can include sensitive personnel matters, and therefore personally directed evaluation conversations are conducted in executive session.*

This Process Requires a Shift in Thinking about Superintendent Evaluation:

Change the subject. Shift attention from the superintendent to the district as the 'subject' of the evaluation.

Limit the scope. Reduce the scope of evaluation...

- from the full range of superintendent knowledge/skills/actions to two questions:
 - "What results for students is the superintendent achieving for the district?"
 - "Are district actions and programs (the means) - reasonable and acceptable?"
- For both questions the board limits its scope, focusing on evidence of 'what is' and comparing it with expectations the board has previously put in writing.

Year-long conversation. From an end-of-year ‘event’ (sometimes an afterthought) to a year-long conversation about district performance.

Methodology Used

The board puts its expectations of the superintendent/district in writing.

- As expectations evolve, they are rewritten and formally approved, ensuring that the board’s current guidance is clearly communicated and always current.
- Performance is judged against expectations that have been previously written and approved by the board.
- When expectations change, they are revised, for use in judging future performance.

An annual cycle of review considers one area of board expectations at a time, on a schedule that assures all areas are reviewed in the course of each year. For each area monitored, the board follows a four-step process:

1. Evidence of performance is presented to or gathered by the board;
2. The board compares evidence against written expectations;
3. The board puts its judgment in writing, documenting for:
 - *Results areas, whether evidence shows reasonable progress toward desired results.*
 - *Other areas, whether evidence shows the district has complied with board guidance.*
4. The board reviews its written expectations for each area, revising them as needed to update its guidance for the next year;

Written board judgments accumulate over the course of the year, then are compiled by the board and provided to the superintendent at year’s end.

Conditions for Successful Implementation

Adherence to the principles and general methodology described above.

Development of written expectations for all major district results areas (outcomes for students) and all major district policy areas (staff performance, instructional program, budget planning).