Board Goal Development

Homework for May 8, 2014 Regular Board Meeting

Rationale Aim: The Board of Education shall identify the important data that leads to effective decision-making and utilize that information effectively in planning improved board governance.

Experiential Aim: All Board members shall feel energized and engaged in the planning process, and shall have an opportunity to speak and participate in a professional setting.

Objective Question: After looking over the "Blueprint for Excellence" report and thinking about other areas of quality and value in our district, what types of data have you seen or heard that are used by the Board for decision-making?

Reflective Question: Thinking about all the different types of data and information that you've just seen or heard, what information motivates you to learn more or what information brings you value as a board member?

Interpretive Question: What kind of changes will we need to make as a Board Governance Team, if any, to better use data?

Decisional Question: What types of data or information would you, as a Board member, like to have over the course of a school year to help you make the best decisions in leading the district? (List as many as you would like)

What are the key criteria from the Blueprint for Excellence that you would connect to our needs as a district to grow and improve? List your Top 3

Check your Top 3	Category from Blueprint for Excellence	Rating
	Visions and Mission	2
	Student Achievement	4
	Educational Equity	3
	Common Core Standards Implementation	2
	Instructional Quality	4
	Change Leadership	4
	Systems Support	2
	Policy & Governance	2
	Parent and Community Engagement	3

10.0 Policy and Governance

10.1 Introduction:

School governance is the combination of many complex factors. While the local school board is officially in charge of educational policy, many other influences, including federal and state laws, government and private grants, and interest groups from the national to local level, all influence the daily decisions of system leaders. In the most effective educational systems, there is clear and explicit alignment between system-level goals and the policies, incentives, and requirements from external sources. Alignment requires making difficult choices, including the rejection of support – and associated requirements – from external sources. A fully-aligned system not only embraces support from the governing body and grant providers, but also has a record of rejecting grants when those incentives are not aligned with district goals. In a democratic system, diverse points of view are recognized and respected. But successful systems are able to employ policy and governance not as agents of discord but of harmony. Disagreement occurs, but once there is resolution of a contentious issue, the refrain is consistent: "This is not the decision I would have made, but the best interests of the district require that we now support it, and I will do so in public and in private, and I encourage everyone else to do the same."

10.2 Aligning the Agenda with Priorities

The time of policymakers, including system-level leaders and board members, is the most important asset they can allocate. A review of board minutes will quickly reveal the extent to which the agenda is aligned with priorities. If the top priority of a board is improved student achievement, but student results, teaching practices, and leadership support for achievement, appear late on the board agenda – well after public comment on bus schedules, construction projects, and personal agendas – then it is not possible to conclude that the priorities of student achievement are aligned with governance priorities. If, on the other hand, there is clear evidence that the governing body has changed its agenda, deliberately elevating board priorities over traditionally time-consuming agenda items, then there is evidence for the alignment of priority with policy that is at the heart of effective system-level improvement.

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10.3 Assessing Policy and Governance

> **Level 0:** No Change – the Board is characterized by personal agendas, territoriality, and self-dealing. In the worst examples, board members have clear financial conflicts of interest with the school system, voting on matters in which they have a personal financial stake. Even without such obvious conflicts, board members are beholden to narrow constituencies that demand strict adherence to a specific agenda in personnel, finance, curriculum, and other areas. Challenges to board policy and practice are met with threats and intimidation, and leadership turnover at every level is high, as administrators flee the District seeking safe career options.

> **Level 1:** Change Resistant – the senior leadership team recognizes that the present organizational structure is dysfunctional and that support systems are not aligned to system objectives, vision, and mission. The level of discomfort is sufficient enough that leaders and policymakers may recognize the need for change but are reluctant to consider significant changes in system-level organization.

> **Level 2:** Change Ready – the Board acknowledges the challenges it has faced in the past and has collectively resolved to improve. While there is not yet significant evidence of improvement, the change-ready Board is willing to consider challenges to past practices.

> **Level 3:** Change Proficient – there are clear and consistent policies that allow governing board members to explore options and question alternatives in private settings. Changing one's mind is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of intellectual growth and a thoughtful consideration of alternatives. When there appears to be convergent thinking – the illusion of agreement amount to all parties – board members will require divergent thinking, asking administrators to present divergent points of view. This prepares the elected public officials to anticipate and engage those alternative points of view.

> **Level 4:** Change Model – the Board holds itself to the same high standards of teachers and administrators. While "data walls" are common in schools, this board has its own data wall, holding itself publicly accountable for its contribution to student success. Each board member has made a personal and public commitment to supporting system-level goals. What they all have in common is a commitment to public data-based accountability for their actions not just during the board meetings, but for the hours between meetings.

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10.4 Assessment of System Performance

Based on our assessment of this system, the present level of performance is: Level 2. Evidence shows that the District is change ready. The governing body has made significant progress compared to previous years and there is evidence that the governing body members recognize the essential nature of their role in improving system-level performance. There are long-standing traditions and policies; however, that will require modification to allow the system to proceed to the next level of performance. Board members should routinely listen and respond to multiple points of view but ultimately make data-based decisions in the best interest of student learning.

Some of the data supporting this finding include:

- Ninety-one percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that school board members make a personal and public commitment to support system level goals.
- Eighty-nine percent agree or strongly agree that divergent thinking and alternative points of view from administrators are welcomed.
- The survey revealed that 73 percent believe that divergent thinking and alternative points of view from teachers is welcomed.

The next step in this process will be to more clearly delineate the roles of the governing Board and Superintendent. The system will be better served by a simple directive from the Board to the Superintendent that, "the Superintendent shall establish, implement, and monitor procedures for school administrators and classroom teachers to maintain effective procedures in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and grading." This will allow the Superintendent and building-level leaders to focus on detailed practices. Cultivate an environment in which the governing board is represented on all key committees within the District, i.e. vision and mission, professional development, etc.

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