

## Fresh Start Series Workshop: Models of Good Board Relations

### *Creating Productive Boards*

Location: MASA Offices, St. Paul, MN  
Date: 10/24/07  
Time: 8:30-3:30  
Presenter: Boyd Bradbury, Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of the Educational Leadership Program at Minnesota State University—Moorhead (bradbury@mnstate.edu)

*An effective and stable school district requires a superintendent and board who work well together. Such collaboration builds positive momentum and public confidence. It also minimizes the turnover that can slow district progress, encourage “flavor of the year” reform agendas and impede academic achievement (Domenach, 2005).*

### Understanding Roles of School Boards and Superintendents

*The relationship between a board and its head of school is often identified as the factor most critical in determining the success of a school in meeting its goals and serving its students. An essential element in that relationship is mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the head and board. The classic description - the Board makes policy, and head carries them out - does not begin to describe the shades of gray that lies between the black and white (Wickenden, 1995).*

#### School Board: Top 10 Responsibilities

1. Determine school's mission and purpose
2. Select the head of school
3. Support the head and assess performance
4. Ensure effective organizational planning
5. Ensure adequate resources
  - financial
  - human
  - facilities
  - time
6. Assure effective management of resources
7. Determine, monitor, and strengthen school's programs and services
8. Enhance school's public standing
9. Ensure legal and ethical integrity, maintaining accountability
10. Recruit and orient new board members; assess board performance.

***Broadly speaking, superintendents work with school boards to build a unity of purpose focused on high achievement for children. Beyond that specific responsibility, the superintendent is the district's educational leader as well as chief executive, responsible for managing and administering district operations (Goodman and Zimmerman, 2000).***

#### Superintendent Top 7 Responsibilities

1. Serving as chief executive officer to the board of education, including recommending all policies and the annual budget.
2. Supporting the board of education by providing good information for decision making.
3. Providing continuous leadership to ensure that the board policies and responsibilities of the board/superintendent team are addressed each day.
4. Overseeing the educational program (curriculum, instruction, co-curricula, textbook adoption, field trips, etc.).
5. Taking responsibility for all personnel matters (hiring, assigning, evaluating, developing, firing, etc.).
6. Developing and administering the budget.
7. Managing business and financial matters.

**In many cases, the struggles of a school district can be tied directly to dysfunction between school boards and superintendents as a result of the failure to mutually respect the roles and responsibilities of the school board and the superintendency.**

#### Superintendency Survival Tips

- Do your homework and communicate effectively with school board members.
- Listen carefully to school board members both individually and collectively.
- Know your community's value system and adjust accordingly.
- Keep school district in good legal and financial shape.
- Always keep the interest of children at the heart of your decisions.
- Work hard and lead by example.

#### References

- Domenach, D. A. (2005). Situational governance: A continuum of board types. *American Association of School Administrators*. Retrieved October 18, 2007 from <http://www.aasa.org/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?mnitemnumber=&tnitemnumber=&itemnumber=3651&unitemnumber=&pf=1&snitemnumber=>
- Goodman, R. H., & Zimmerman, Jr., W. G. (2000). *Thinking differently: Recommendations for 21<sup>st</sup> century school board/superintendent leadership, governance, and teamwork for high student achievement*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.
- Wickenden, J. (1995). *Roles, responsibilities, and relationships*. Retrieved October 18, 2007 from <http://www.iss.edu/schoolboard/Roles.html>