An Exploratory Study of…
School Board-Superintendent Relationships in Minnesota

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Superintendent Feedback

- Survey link sent by email to…
  333 current superintendents
  49 recently-retired superintendents
  (100% MASA members)
- Total Sample = 382
- Total Respondents = 213 or 56%
- PLUS Interviews with 10 superintendents

Finding #1: SB Relationships

- SURVEY said:
  95% “VERY GOOD” or “GOOD”
- Interviewees said:
  100% “VERY GOOD” or “GOOD”
  8/10 predicted most others at “GOOD”
  2/10 predicted even lower ratings
Finding #2: HIGH Survey Ratings

**Effectiveness?**
99% “VERY GOOD” or “GOOD”

**Evaluation by School Board?**
90% “VERY FAIR” or “FAIR” process
86% “EXCELLENT” or “GOOD” ratings

**Job Satisfaction?**
88% “VERY GOOD” or “GOOD”

Finding #3: Many Links Evident

**SB Relationship?**
- “VERY GOOD”
- “GOOD”
- “POOR”

**Other Job Factors?**
- Highest ratings for Satisfaction
- Effectiveness
- Fairness of Evaluation
- Most Recent Rating
- School Board Leadership

- Lower ratings
- Even lower ratings

Finding #4: MN & AASA Similar

**MINNESOTA**
- 48% 1-999
- 30% 1,000-2,999
- 47% 3 hrs or less
- 44% Leadership
- #1 Support is SB
- #2 Support is Skills
- #1 Inhibitor is $1 Support is SB
- Followed by SB

**AASA**
- 32% 1-999
- 33% 1,000-2,999
- 49% 3 hrs or less
- 42% Leadership
- #1 Support is Skills
- #1 Inhibitor is $
Finding #5: “WORKING WELL”
SB Policies, Individual Behaviors:
- Board Values (78%)
- Board Policy-Making Role (70%)
- Individual Authority Limits (70%)
- Serve Student/District Interests (63%)
- Communications with Staff (50%)

Finding #6: “OF CONCERN TO ME”
SB Policies, Individual Behaviors:
- Board Values (22%)
- Board Policy-Making Role (30%)
- Individual Authority Limits (30%)
- Serve Student/District Interests (28%)
- Communications with Staff (36%)

Issue: OUTLIER Board Behaviors
Superintendents report “SOME” or “NO”
- Board Values: 14% (8%)
- Board Policy-Making Role: 16% (14%)
- Individual Authority Limits: 19% (11%)
- Serve Student/District Interests: 15% (23%)
- Communications with Staff: 16% (33%)
Finding #7: “MOST IMPORTANT”

Superintendents interviewed said:
- Board Policy-Making Role is separate from Superintendent Role to Administer Operations (4 of 10)
- Board Requirement to Serve District/Students and Not Be Conflicted by Group Loyalties (4 of 10)
- All 5 Behaviors are “highly important”

KEY CONCEPTS from Literature

- Increasing Political Pressures
- Role Confusion
- “Trustee Role” vs. “Delegate Role”
- “Lone Ranger” Role
- Zone of Acceptance for Decisions
- “Power over Others” vs. “Power with Others”
- Teamwork in Atmosphere of Mutual Respect

Finding #8: TIPS for Relationships

- #1 Key Factor is Communications
- Importance of the School Board Chair
- Joint Training by MSBA or NSBA
- Work Through Roles and Expectations
- FORM – STORM – NORM - PERFORM
- One-on-One Relationship with Each Member
- Effective Superintendent = Effective Teacher
Implications for Practice

- SB-Superintendent Relationships are Critical
- Get Board Policies & Practices in Place
- Individual Board Members Should Align Behaviors with SB Policies, Practices
- Plan Development Training (inc. Conflict)
- Identify Outlier Behaviors that Undermine Effective Board Governance vs. Preserving Individual Member Role & Contributions

Questions are Welcome!

- See the MASA WEB SITE for both: 42-pg Full Study Report & Report of Individual Survey Responses
- OR Contact me: Mary Ann Nelson
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