

## An Exploratory Study of...

# School Board-Superintendent Relationships in Minnesota

October 2010 MASA Fall Conference  
Dr. Mary Ann Nelson

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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**

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## 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*

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## 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"

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## 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

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## 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 \$

### AASA

32% 1-999  
33% 1,000-2,999  
49% 3 hrs or less  
42% Leadership  
#1 Support is **Skills**,  
followed by **SB**  
#1 Inhibitor is \$

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**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%)

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**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%)

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**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%

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### **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”

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### **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

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### **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

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## 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

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## 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**  
[man@q.com](mailto:man@q.com)  
612-836-0120

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