

Embracing and elevating evaluation

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Throughout my time working with school boards, a consistent question and struggle has been about evaluation. Too often it is a task that is done in haste, or in some cases, not at all. Allow me to explain why you shouldn't make the mistake of overlooking this important opportunity for board and superintendent growth.

The legislature does not prescribe a specific tool, which leaves the decision about how to evaluate to the local board. The mandate is that you must evaluate your superintendent on an annual basis, using a method that provides a designation of highly effective, effective, or needs improvement [IC 20-28-11.5](#).

Start by looking at the big picture of why evaluations are a part of the employer/employee relationship. After all, couldn't we just do our jobs without them? Technically, yes, we could just make sure we get our stuff done without the additional work and complication of evaluation, but that is really missing the point. An evaluation at it's best should be about reflection, feedback, and professional growth. Yet for many employees, it is merely a means to determine whether they receive a raise, and how much.

Moving Past the Minutiae

So how do you move past the minutiae to something that is truly indispensable? Perhaps the most important step is to treat the evaluation as a continuous process rather than an annual event. That way, the final record produced at the end of the year becomes a reflection of the work you (that is the board) and your superintendent have been doing all along. If done well, the evaluation process opens lines of communication and strengthens the connection between the board members and the superintendent.

The key to success, like so many things, is planning. Bring the team together in the summer when teachers and students are out of the classroom, and there is an opportunity to slow down a little bit. Use this time to collaborate on the goals and objectives for the next school year. You should be establishing priorities and focus for both governance and administration.

Keep in mind that goals are great, but if they are going to be effective, they need to be measurable. They must allow for evidence of success, and they must be timebound. A goal without a specified target is just a great idea that is never really accomplished.

Once the goals and objectives are set, spend time communicating about the progress being made throughout the school year. The work of the superintendent is to present evidence of the ongoing progress, which allows the board the opportunity to evaluate the success of the work being done. If the foundation is laid well, the process of evaluation can truly be a tool for collaboration, communication, and continuous improvement.

Upcoming Webinar on Conducting Superintendent Evaluations

For a more in-depth look at superintendent evaluation strategies and tools, join me for a free one-hour webinar on May 25 at 11:30 a.m. or on May 26 at 6:30 p.m. You can register at <https://web.isba-ind.org/events>.