

Five Approaches to Support an Effective Superintendent Evaluation

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Superintendent evaluation can be a daunting task, and unfortunately, it causes stress for many superintendents. If the process and the performance expectations are not clearly defined, then the evaluation, regardless of the tool used, is not set up for success. Here are five points to consider to strengthen your superintendent evaluation.

1. Consider the purpose of the evaluation

Indiana's superintendent evaluation statute, found at IC 20-28-11.5-4, requires the school board to annually judge the performance of the superintendent using one of four designations: Highly Effective, Effective, Improvement Necessary, or Ineffective. Beyond that, the purpose of the evaluation is a philosophical and foundational consideration for the board.

Communication is fundamental to understanding the priorities, needs, and outcomes of the district, and the evaluation, if done well, should be a powerful communication tool for the leadership team. The evaluation should be an opportunity for continuous improvement. It helps answer important questions like where are we being successful, where are we struggling, and are we doing what we said we were going to do?

2. Focus on evidence and data

In a world where unsubstantiated statements on social media become "fact," understanding and using data to inform decisions could not be more crucial to the work we are doing for our children. For an evaluation to be effective, it cannot be based on anecdotal evidence, hearsay, or individual grievances. It is critical for the superintendent to provide the board with evidence and data that substantiates the work being done.

3. There must be measurable objectives

The evaluation should be based on measurable progress toward clearly stated objectives aligned to the goals of the strategic plan. These are not edicts handed down from the board to the superintendent; rather, they are the result of a collaborative dialogue and careful consideration of the needs and opportunities for continued success.

4. Connect to the performance indicators

I have heard that the IAPSS/ISBA evaluation rubric is difficult for boards to use. Yes, it is a highly developed tool, but if approached in a systematic way, it need not be overwhelming. Whenever reporting to the board, the superintendent should be directed to connect the work being done to each of the indicators in the evaluation tool.

5. Evaluation is not an annual event

Boards struggle to complete a fair and objective evaluation when they have too little information or when they receive an overwhelming dump of information all at once. Make time throughout the year to analyze the superintendent's performance, at least quarterly.

The IAPSS/ISBA evaluation tool and manual can be found at <https://www.isba-ind.org/superintendent-evaluation.html>.